HALLOWE'EN SPECIAL

INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE QUEEN ANNE RICE RETURNS
TERROR AND WONDER EXPLORING THE GOTHIC IMAGINATION
MOST HAUNTED HOTEL UNINVITED GUESTS AND GHOSTS

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM

ForteanTimes

FT320 NOVEMBER 2014 £4.25

HOW HORROR COMICS SPARKED A NATIONAL PANIC IN 1950^{S} AMERICA...

EERIE SUSPENSE AND HORRIFIC FEAR

9 770308 589224 11

FORTEAN TIMES 320

ATTACK OF THE POISONOUS MUSHROOM GROWTH • THE GOTHIC IMAGINATION • SHROUD OF THE RIPPER • GECKOS' SPACE SEX ODYSSEY • PUBS AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE

NOV 2014

Why Not Be A Proofreader?

As a freelance proofreader and copy editor you can earn a good income making sure that copy is professional and error free. Earning your share can be fun, varied and profitable.

Our Proofreading and Copy Editing Course will show you how to set yourself up as a freelancer – either full or part-time – putting you in control of your working life! You'll receive:

- A first-class, home-study course created by professionals
- Expert, personal tuition from your tutor
- Advice on all types of proofreading and copy editing techniques
- Plus much more!

If you want to be a proofreader and copy editor, this is the way to start! It's ideal for beginners. No previous experience or special education required. You can be earning in as little as 2-3 months. 15 day trial. For free details visit our website or call us today!

www.wbproofreading.com

FREE CALL 24 ☎ HRS **0800 856 2008** Quote Ref: AT1614P

Expert Opinions

"The material is very informative and interesting as well as covering pretty much everything you would need to know when starting to proofread. There are a lot of tips and ideas for freelancers in general that you can see have been tried and tested and are being passed on in good faith.

"Overall, I found the information in this course very useful. It covered all the main areas that anyone interested in working as a proofreader/copy editor would need to know."

Shazia Fardous,
Freelance Proofreader and Copyeditor

"This is an extremely helpful course both for those starting proofreading and for those who, like me, need to be reminded of everything we have forgotten. Above all, I thoroughly enjoyed the tone of voice of the author – he writes with authority but manages to keep a light touch."

Dorothy Nicolle

Start TODAY When You Enrol ONLINE!

START YOUR COURSE TODAY by visiting our website. Your course modules and the first assignment are available online so you can start studying while you wait for your course books to arrive.

Reasons To Enrol

- Specialist course on proofreading and copy editing.
- Caring constructive help from expert tutors.
- Four tutor-marked assignments.
- Help and advice from our experienced Student Advisory Team.
- Flexible study programme.
- Specialist advice on how to find work.
- Enrol when it suits you.
- Instant access to course material when you enrol online.
- 15 days trial.
- Online Student Community Area.
- Advice on how to set yourself up in business.

Please send me free details of how to become a successful proofreader and copy editor.

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

....

....

.... POST CODE ....

EMAIL ....

FREEPOST RSSK-JZAC-JCJG
The Writers Bureau
DEPT AT1614P
MANCHESTER
M3 1LE

25 Years of Success

www.facebook.com/writersbureau
www.twitter.com/writersbureau

email: 14FP@writersbureau.com
Please include your name and address

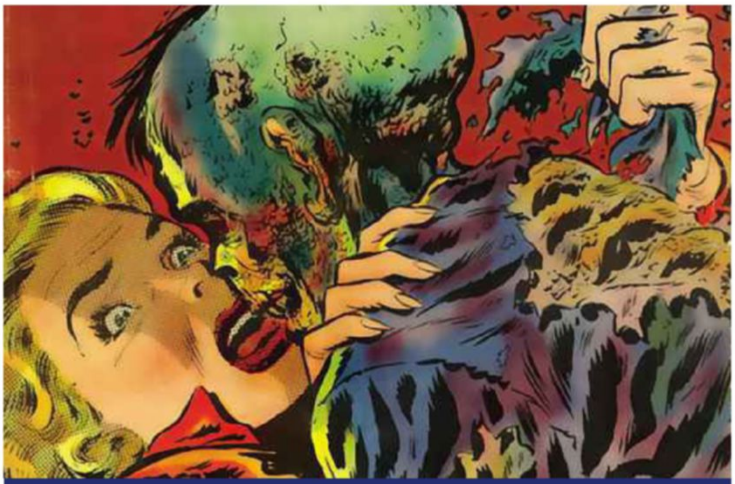
Members of The British Institute for Learning and Development and ABCC

ForteanTimes

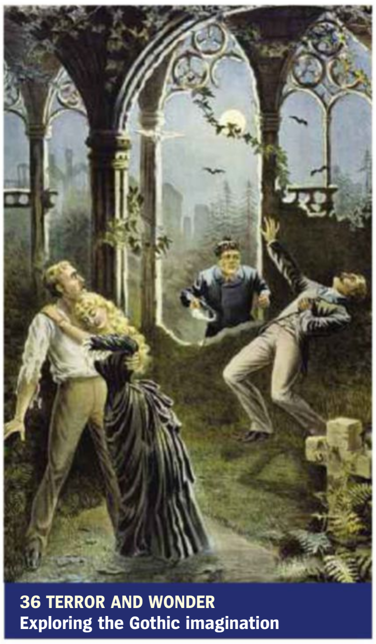
Available on the iPhone
App Store

CONTENTS

the world of strange phenomena



28 ATTACK OF THE POISONOUS MUSHROOM GROWTH
How horror comics caused a moral panic in 1950s America



BRITISH LIBRARY

36 TERROR AND WONDER
Exploring the Gothic imagination

IAN MCILGORM

18 SHROUD OF THE RIPPER
Controversial new theory names killer

MICHAEL LIONSTAR

44 INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE QUEEN
The return of Anne Rice

GEERT VERHOEVEN

16 STONEHENGE GETS BIGGER
New technology remaps ancient site

COVER: GÉRARD GOFFAUX

Fortean Times 320

strange days

Icelandic lake monster gets official thumbs up, student trapped in giant vagina, teen with too many teeth, London's most haunted hotel, search for the EmDrive, geckos' space sex odyssey, wasp invasion, holy pierogi – and much more.

12 SCIENCE
14 GHOSTWATCH
16 ARCHÆOLOGY
17 CLASSICAL CORNER
21 ALIEN ZOO
23 MYTHCONCEPTIONS
25 FAIRIES & FOLKLORE
26 THE UFO FILES

features

COVER STORY

28 ATTACK OF THE POISONOUS MUSHROOM GROWTH

ROBERT GUFFEY looks back at the moral panic sparked by American horror comics in the 1940s and 1950s and asks whether what was really at work was political propaganda and the simple art of distraction...

36 TERROR AND WONDER

As a major new exhibition exploring our fascination with the mysterious and macabre opens at the British Library, **GAIL-NINA ANDERSON** examines the roots of the Gothic imagination in art, architecture and literature.

44 INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE QUEEN

After a decade away from her Vampire Chronicles, during which time she's been writing books about Christ, the queen of modern vampire fiction is back to reclaim her bloody throne from the young pretenders. She spoke to **ANGELINE B ADAMS** and **REMCO VAN STRATEN** about her long career and her latest book.

reports

48 THE FIRST FORTEANS

No 53. The Cat-faced Woman of East Florence

76 STORIES FROM THE ILLUSTRATED POLICE NEWS

No 33. The Poullet Claimant

forum

52 An American institution in low spirits
by Guy Lyon Playfair

54 Beware Bolívar's bones by SD Tucker

regulars

02 EDITORIAL
57 REVIEWS
69 LETTERS
73 IT HAPPENED TO ME
79 PHENOMENOMIX
80 STRANGE DEATHS

EDITOR
DAVID SUTTON
(drsutton@forteantimes.com)
FOUNDING EDITORS
BOB RICKARD (bobrickard@mail.com)
PAUL SIEVEKING (sieveking@forteantimes.com)
ART DIRECTOR
ETIENNE GILFILLAN
(etienne@forteantimes.com)
BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR
VAL STEVENSON
(val@forteantimes.com)
RESIDENT CARTOONIST
HUNT EMERSON
SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES
www.subsinfo.co.uk
ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

FORTEAN TIMES is produced for Dennis Publishing by Wild Talents Ltd. Postal address: Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD.

You can manage your existing subscription through http://www.subsinfo.co.uk/ – this should be your first port of call if you have any queries about your subscription.

Change your address, renew your subscription or report problems
UK subscriptions: 0844 844 0049
USA & Canada subscriptions: (+1) 888-428-6676
Fax (+1) 757-428-6253 email cs@imsnews.com
Other overseas subscriptions: +44 (0)1795 592 909
Fax: +44 (0)1795 414 555

LICENSING & SYNDICATION
FORTEAN TIMES IS AVAILABLE FOR
INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION – CONTACT:
Syndication Senior Manager
ANJ DOSAJ-HALAI TEL: +44- (0) 20 7907 6132
Anj_Dosaj-Halai@dennis.co.uk
Licensing Manager
CARLOTTA SERANTONI TEL: +44- (0) 20 7907 6550
Carlotta_Serantoni@dennis.co.uk
Licensing & Syndication Assistant
NICOLE ADAMS TEL: +44- (0) 20 7907 6134
Nicole_Adams@dennis.co.uk
YOU CAN REACH FT ON THE INTERNET
www.forteantimes.com

© Copyright Dennis Publishing Limited

PUBLISHED BY DENNIS PUBLISHING,
30 Cleveland Street
London W1T 4JD, UK
Tel: 020 7907 6000

GROUP PUBLISHER
PAUL RAYNER
020 7907 6663
paul_rayner@dennis.co.uk

CIRCULATION MANAGER
JAMES MANGAN
james.mangan@seymour.co.uk

EXPORT CIRCULATION MANAGER
GERALDINE GROBLER
geraldine.grobler@seymour.co.uk

PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE
SOPHIE VALENTINE
020 7907 6057
sophie_valentine@dennis.co.uk

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
STEVE NICOLAOU
020 7907 6633
ryan_gw@dennis.co.uk

DEPUTY ADVERTISING MANAGER
CIARAN SCARRY
020 7907 6683
ciaran_scarry@dennis.co.uk

SALES EXECUTIVE
ISABELLA COX
020 7907 6717
isabella_cox@dennis.co.uk

PRINTED BY POLESTAR BICESTER

DISTRIBUTION
Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide
by Seymour Distribution Ltd.
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT
Tel: 020 7429 4000 / Fax: 020 7429 4001
Queries on overseas availability should be emailed to info@seymour.co.uk
Speciality store distribution by Worldwide Magazine Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 7881272

STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES
12 issues: UK £39.98; EU £47.50

Fortean Times (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 4JD, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is $89.99.
Airfreight and mailing in the USA is by Agent named Air Business, C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica, New York, 11434.
Periodical postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431, USA.
US Postmaster: Send address changes to: Fortean Times, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 500, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA.

REST OF THE WORLD £55; US $89.99 ($161.98 for 24 issues)

DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED
GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR IAN LEGGETT
FINANCE DIRECTOR BRETT REYNOLDS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KERIN O'CONNOR
CHIEF EXECUTIVE JAMES TYE
COMPANY FOUNDER FELIX DENNIS

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.
Circulation 17,024 (Jan-Dec 2011)

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

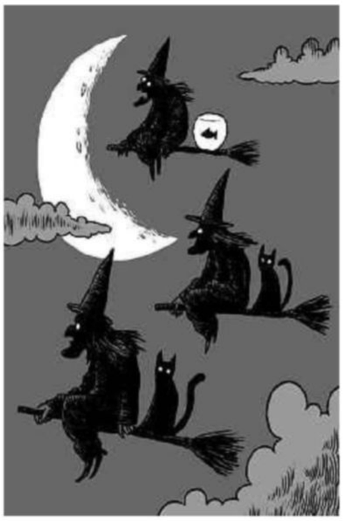
© Fortean Times: OCTOBER 2014

editorial

The horror! The horror!

Welcome to our Hallowe'en edition, an annual excuse to explore the spookier side of the fortean world. This year, we take a bracing autumnal dip in the chilly waters of the Gothic, marking the opening of a major new exhibition, the anniversary of an astonishing moral panic and the return of a Vampire Queen.

Cultural historian extraordinaire Gail-Nina Anderson takes us on a tour through the roots and evolution of the Gothic imagination (pp36-43), tracing the way in which the appropriation of mediæval styles of architecture by a pair of eccentric 18th century writers morphed into a full-blown literary and artistic movement, came to thrive in the popular media of Penny Dreadfuls and cinema, and bequeathed to the world such creations as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination*, an exhibition running at the British Library in London until 20 January 2015, gives visitors the opportunity to examine some 250 artefacts associated with the Gothic – from Ann Radcliffe's letters and handwritten drafts of Frankenstein to set designs from Hammer films and a vampire-killing kit – and will surely be a must-see for forteans.



"TURNS OUT I'M BLOODY ALLERGIC"

MARTIN ROSS

Popular literature and movies have both been the source of moral panics over the centuries, with the guardians of established culture and public morality getting worked up about what female novel readers or semi-literate cinema audiences were reading, seeing and putting into their extremely vulnerable and suggestible little brains. 60 years ago, the creation of the Comics Code in 1954 was the culmination of a major panic about the effects of comic books on the equally malleable brains of those young people who chose to spend their 10 cents on the latest copy of *Tales from the Crypt* or *The Haunt of Fear* rather than *Heidi* or *The Wizard of Oz*. Horror comics became the focus of a campaign linking them to juvenile delinquency and were legislated against, banned, and even burned in public across the US. Only in America? Actually, no; while the US scares of the 1950s arose in part from fears of Communist infiltration creating these four-colour assaults on Middle America, British anti-comic campaigners of the era came from the socialist left, who saw imported American comics as the vulgar bearers of a growing cultural imperialism emanating from across the Atlantic; by 1955, the Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act had been passed, banning the sale of horror comics on pain of a £100 fine or four months in prison. As this suggests, and as Robert Guffey argues in our cover feature (pp28-35), horror comics could be used by those of any political persuasion to stand in for or distract from whatever real horrors needed to be disguised, covered up or ignored.

And bringing us up to date, Angeline Adams and Remco van Straten talk to the queen of vampire fiction, Anne Rice, set to reclaim her bloody throne as she returns to the field she left a decade ago with a new instalment in her Vampire Chronicles.

ENFIELD ON SCREEN

In other spooky news, production is due to begin on a three-part TV drama based on a classic of modern forteana: the Enfield poltergeist case. *The Enfield Haunting* will be directed by Kristoffer Nyholm, director of Nordic noir hit *The Killing*, and star Timothy Spall, Juliet Stevenson and Matthew Macfadyen. The script is apparently adapted from Guy Lyon Playfair's 1980 book *This House is Haunted*, based on the experiences of Playfair and fellow investigator the late Maurice Grosse as they sought to establish the facts behind the events in this disturbing and high-profile case from the late 1970s. The drama will be broadcast on Sky Living some time next year. In the meantime, while we wait to see Matthew Macfadyen as Guy Lyon Playfair, you can experience the return of the genuine article to our pages as Guy asks just what has been going on at the American Society for Psychical Research in recent years. Turn to page 52 to read the article; and if anyone has answers to Guy's questions, then we would be interested to hear from you in the letters pages.

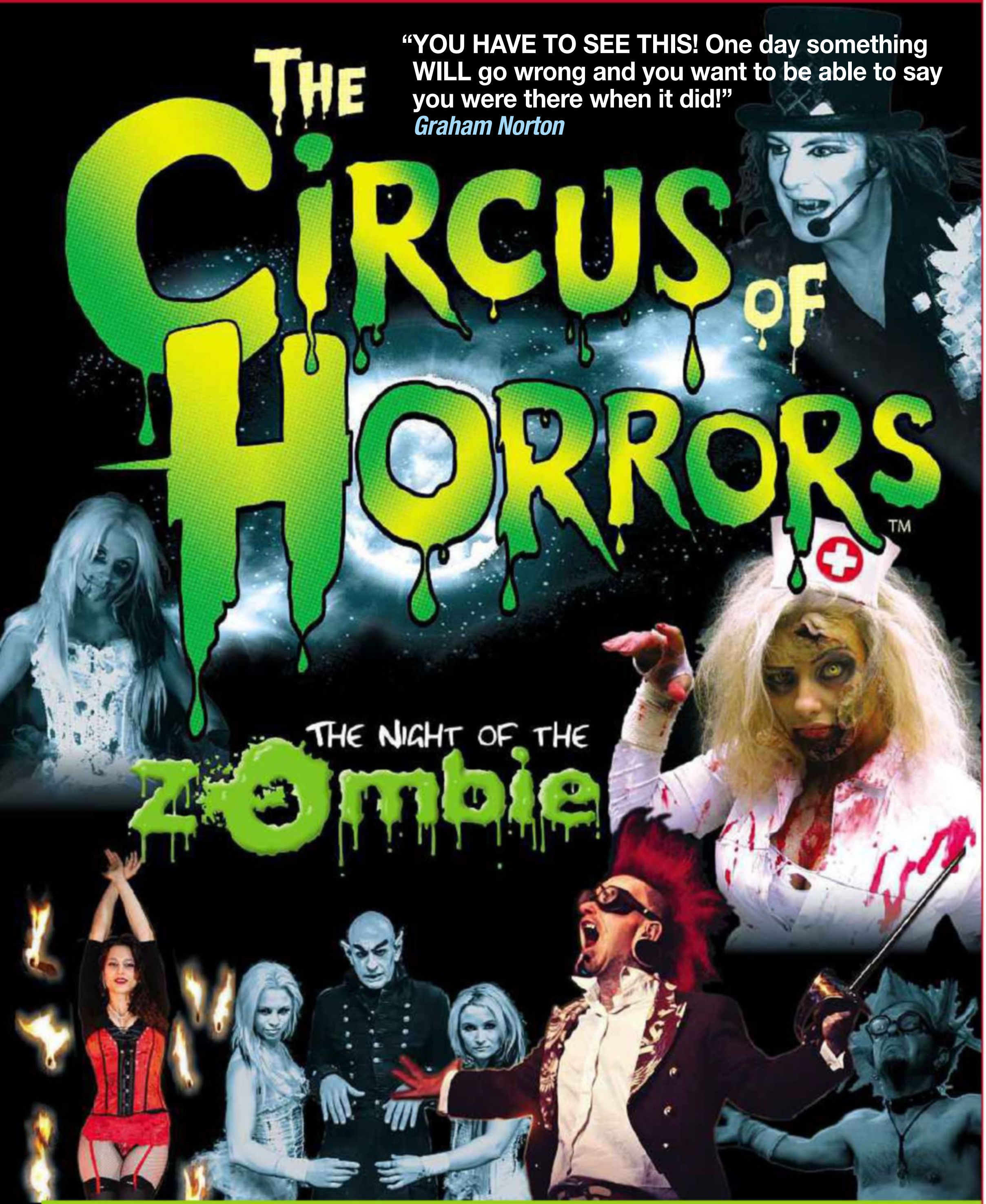
DAVID R SUTTON

BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
PAUL SIEVEKING

Why fortean?
Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!
SEE PAGE 74

THE SHOW THAT STORMED INTO THE FINALS OF BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT NOW A WEST END SMASH!



"YOU HAVE TO SEE THIS! One day something WILL go wrong and you want to be able to say you were there when it did!"
Graham Norton

"BLOODY MARVELOUS!" ★★★★★
Edinburgh Evening News Festival Review

"FREAKY, FUNNY, SHOCKING & SEXY!" ★★★★★
Bizarre

"BLOODY GOOD FUN!" ★★★★★
Time Out

"Completely wowed the audience"
The Daily Mail

"A Bloody Good Night Out"
The Times

"FREAKING AWESOME"
The Sun

ON TOUR IN 2014

Venue	Date	Phone	Website
WOOKEY HOLE THEATRE	24-25 OCT	01749 672243	wookey.co.uk T
KIDDERMINSTER The Glades	26 OCT		dcleisurecentres.co.uk T
WHITLEY BAY Playhouse	27 OCT	0844 248 1588	playhousewhitleybay.co.uk T
LANCASTER Grand Theatre	28 OCT	01524 64695	lancastergrand.co.uk T
BLACKPOOL The Globe	29 OCT -1 NOV	0871 222 9090	blackpoolpleasurebeach.com T
RETFORD Majestic Theatre	2 NOV	0177 770 6866	majesticretford.com
HAYES Beck Theatre	3 NOV	020 8561 8371	becktheatre.org.uk
GRAYS Civic Hall	5 NOV	08453 005 264	impulseleisure.co.uk T
CHELTENHAM Town Hall	6 NOV	0844 576 2210	cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk T
CHATHAM Central Theatre	7 NOV	01634 338 338	medway.gov.uk/theatrebookings T
DUNSTABLE Grove Theatre	8 NOV	01582 602 080	grovetheatre.co.uk T
CROYDON Fairfield Halls	10 NOV	0208 688 9291	fairfield.co.uk T
HASTINGS White Rock Theatre	11 NOV	01424 462 288	whiterocktheatre.org.uk T
FOLKESTONE Leas Cliff Hall	12 NOV	08448 713015	leascliffhall.co.uk T
CLACTON Princes Theatre	14 NOV	01255 686 633	essex-live.co.uk T
LEAMINGTON SPA The Assembly	NOV 15	0844 854 1358	leamingtonassembly.com T
WELLINGBOROUGH Castle Theatre	16 NOV	01933 270 007	thecastle.org.uk
WATFORD Colosseum	18 NOV	0845 075 3993	watfordcolosseum.co.uk T
SEVENOAKS The Stag	19 NOV	01732 450 175	stagsevenoaks.co.uk T
FAREHAM Ferneham Hall	20 NOV	01329 231 942	fernehamhall.co.uk
EXMOUTH Pavilion	21 NOV	01395 222 477	exmouthpavilion.co.uk T
LONDON Coronet Theatre	23 NOV	08444 993 666	ticketmaster.co.uk T
BROXBOURNE Civic Hall	24 NOV	01992 441 946	broxbourne.gov.uk/leisure T
GLASGOW King's Theatre	25 NOV	0844 871 7648	ambassadortickets.com/King's-Theatre T
BRADFORD St Georges Hall	26 NOV	01274 432 000	bradford-theatres.co.uk/st-georges-hall T
CREWE Lyceum Theatre	27 NOV	01270 368 242	crewelyceum.co.uk T
NEWTOWN Theatr Hafren	28 NOV	01686 614 555	theatrhafren.co.uk T
LLANDUDNO Venue cymru	29 NOV	01492 872 000	venuecymru.co.uk T

ON TOUR IN 2015

Venue	Date	Phone	Website
BRIGHTON Theatre Royal	8 JAN	08448 717 650	ambassadortickets.com/brighton T
POOLE Lighthouse	9 JAN	0844 406 8666	lighthousepoole.co.uk T
PAIGNTON Palace Theatre	10 JAN	01803 665 800	palacetheatrepaignton.co.uk
EXETER Corn Exchange	11 JAN	01392 665 938	exeter.gov.uk/cornexchange T
ANDOVER Lights	12 JAN	01264 368 368	thelights.org.uk
MILTON KEYNES theatre	13 JAN	0844 871 7652	ambassadortickets.com/miltonkeynes T
SWANSEA Grand Theatre	14 JAN	01792 475 715	swansea.gov.uk/swanseagrandtheatre T
YEOVIL Octagon	15 JAN	01935 422 884	octagon-theatre.co.uk
SOUTHEND Cliffs Pavilion	16 JAN	01702 351135	thecliffspavilion.co.uk T
BUXTON Opera House	17 JAN	0845 127 2190	buxtonoperahouse.org.uk
NEWARK Palace Theatre	18 JAN	01636 655 755	palacenewark.com

T = TICKETS ALSO AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE FROM 08444 993 666 ticketmaster.co.uk

CIRCUSOFHORRORS.CO.UK

WARNING: The Circus of Horrors contains some nudity and language of an adult nature, it is not suitable for children, sissies or chavs. This show contains nuts! The dangerous nature of our performances means individual acts may sometimes change

A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

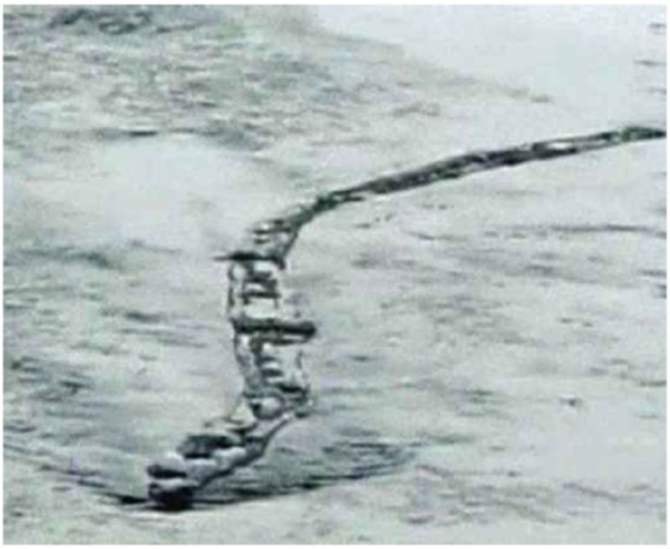
strangedays

Worm gets official sanction

Iceland's most famous lake monster is declared a reality by Icelandic government investigation

An Icelandic government investigation has ruled that Lagarfljotsormurinn, the country's most celebrated legendary sea serpent, actually exists. The Lagarfljótsormur or 'Lagarfljót Worm' is purported to live in Lagarfljót, a freshwater, glacial-fed lake in Egilsstaðir, eastern Iceland. The earliest recorded sightings date back to the *Icelandic Annals* of 1345. The monster is typically described as being 300ft (90m) long with many humps, and has also been reported outside the water, lying coiled up or slithering into the trees. In ancient times, sightings were thought to augur a great event such as a natural disaster.

In their book *Icelandic Folk and Fairy Tales*, folklorists May and Hallberg Hallmundsson describe one origin tale of the beast: long, long ago, a woman who lived on a farm in the Lagarfljót district, near a stream where it broadened into the lake, gave a gold ring to her daughter, instructing her to catch a 'lingworm' (heath dragon) and put the ring underneath it in her linen chest. She did so, "but when the girl went to look at her ring again, the snake had grown so large that the chest was beginning to come apart. Then the girl was frightened and she picked up the chest with everything in it and threw it into the lake. A long time passed, and gradually people became aware that there was a serpent in the lake, for it was beginning to kill both people and animals crossing the waters." Two Finns called in to destroy it and retrieve the gold said that they'd tied its head and tail to the bottom of the lake but couldn't kill it because there was a still larger 'dragon' underneath.



In 1963, the head of the Icelandic Forest Service saw the worm

In 1963, the head of the Icelandic National Forest Service, Sigurður Blöndal, reported seeing the giant worm, and in 1998 a teacher and students at Hallormsstaðir School also claimed a sighting. In February 2012, the Icelandic national broadcaster, RÚV, aired a video shot by Hjörtur E Kjerúlf, thought to show the long serpentine form of the Worm swimming in snow-covered, icy water (pictured at left). This was widely viewed on YouTube. Sceptics dismissed it as an inanimate object agitated by the rapid current – possibly an ice-caked fishing net or a piece of cloth caught on a branch. Kjerúlf states that he first noticed the thing while drinking coffee, and that it was still there when he finished, presumably some minutes later, indicating that it hadn't moved (or moved very little) during that time. It also hadn't moved in the time it took him to find his camera, go out to the bank, and videotape it (from two different angles). Kjerúlf never claimed he had filmed the Lagarfljót Worm; he left its identification to others.

The Fljótsdalshérað municipal council set up a 13-person 'truth commission' to determine whether the video was the real deal. The inquiry has just completed its investigation. Declaring the video authentic, it recommends further investigation and research. Sceptics won't be slow to point out that the commission's conclusion may well have been influenced by the dramatic rise in cryptozoological tourism in the wake of the 2012 video.

A sightseeing boat named *Lagarfljótsormurinn*, operating on the lake, seeks to preserve the traditions of the Worm. Even if the video does indeed show a living creature, it may not be as monstrous as the legends say. Species of fish have been found which resemble 'sea monsters'; for example the frilled shark (*Chlamydoselachus anguineus*) and the giant oarfish (*Regalecus glesne*). *Discovery News, Sept; Ancient-origins.net, 14 Sept 2014.*

VAGINAL VICISSITUDES

Japanese artist loves hers; US student gets stuck in one

PAGE 6

HAUNTED HOTEL

The England cricket team vs the Langham spooks

PAGE 14

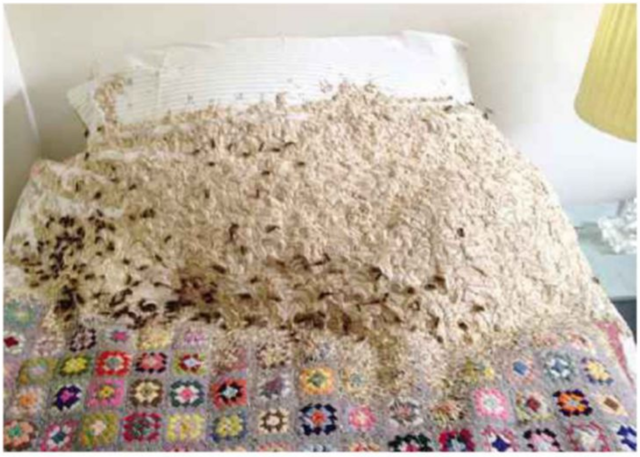
TELLING HAIRY TALES

Was Borneo's man-beast shot after going on a rampage?

PAGE 21

Invasion!

Wasps, bees, hornets...



SWNS.COM

This nest of more than 5,000 wasps – 3ft (90cm) wide and 18in (46cm) deep – was found in an unused spare bedroom of a house in St Cross, Winchester, Hampshire, where a small window had been left open. Pest controller John Birkett said removing the nest from the bed was his most unusual job in 45 years. He believed it had taken at least three months to build, and said it would have been "extremely dangerous" if the homeowner had tried to remove it herself. The owner lived alone in the five-bedroom house, and had not been in the room with the nest since May. Her son discovered the winged squatters when he went into the bedroom for a snooze. They had chewed through the pillows and the mattress of the bed in order to make their nest larger. However, Mr Birkett did manage to save the owner's crocheted blanket. "The nest split in two and I have never seen so many wasps," he said. It took him about two hours on 24 August to spray the insects and dismantle the nest. *BBC News, 27 Aug; Hampshire Chronicle, D.Mirror, 28 Aug 2014.*

- Three days earlier, in Queens, New York, Frieda Turkmenilli, 66, discovered there were 50,000 bees living above her ceiling at Gregory Hall Condominium. They had been there for about a year. Apiary expert Anthony "Tony Bees" Planakis removed a 2ft (60cm) portion of ceiling and uncovered a massive beehive oozing with about 10lb (4.5kg) of honey. After saving 95 per cent of the bees, Planakis and a colleague took the hive to an upstate bee haven in Walton for further study. *NY Post, NY Daily News, 23 Aug 2014.*

- On 3 September, a nest containing more than 100 giant hornets crashed through the ceiling of a house in Maidenhead, Berkshire. "The weight of the nest in the attic caused it to crash through the ceiling into the hallway," said a fire service spokesman. "Scores of hornets were released into the house and the couple [who lived there] locked themselves in their bedroom and called the fire service. The Slough crew helped the pair escape down a ladder from the window." These large hornets from Asia have caused the deaths of six people in France. They can grow up to 2in (5cm) long and have a sting a quarter of an inch (6mm) long. *D.Telegraph, 4 Sept 2014.*

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

7/7 bomber turned me into a lesbian

(London) Eve. Standard, 15 Mar 2011.

Drug lord killed for a second time

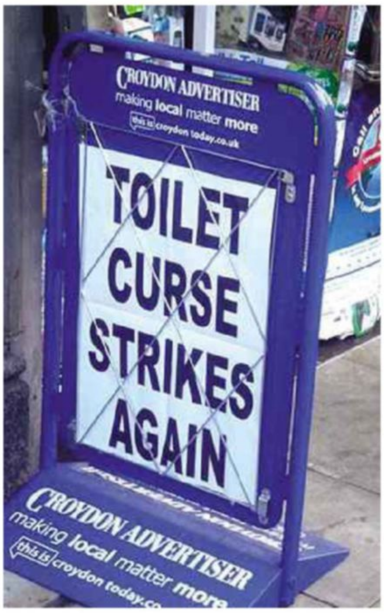
(London) Eve. Standard, 10 Mar 2014.

Chinese soldiers face growth problem

Toronto Star, 19 Feb 2014.

'Alien space pod' to land at the Serpentine

(London) Eve. Standard, 12 Mar 2014.



Croydon Advertiser, –Mar 2014.

Dragons set to invade quiet Somerset town

Western Daily Press, 7 Mar 2014.

Dad died a 'guinea pig'

Sun, 8 Mar 2014.

Sausage kills businessman

D.Mail, 20 Feb 2014.

Shape-shifting icon plans next move

Toronto Star, 25 Feb 2014.

SIDELINES...

LUCIFER CALLING

Father Marian Rajchel, who carried out a rite of exorcism on a teenage girl in Jaroslaw, south-eastern Poland, said he was receiving sinister text messages from the Devil, such as: "She will not come out of this hell. She's mine. Anyone who prays for her will die." Commented the parish priest: "Often the owners of mobile phones are not even aware that they are being used like this." *D.Mail, 30 July 2014.*

HUMUNGOUS PEAT BOG

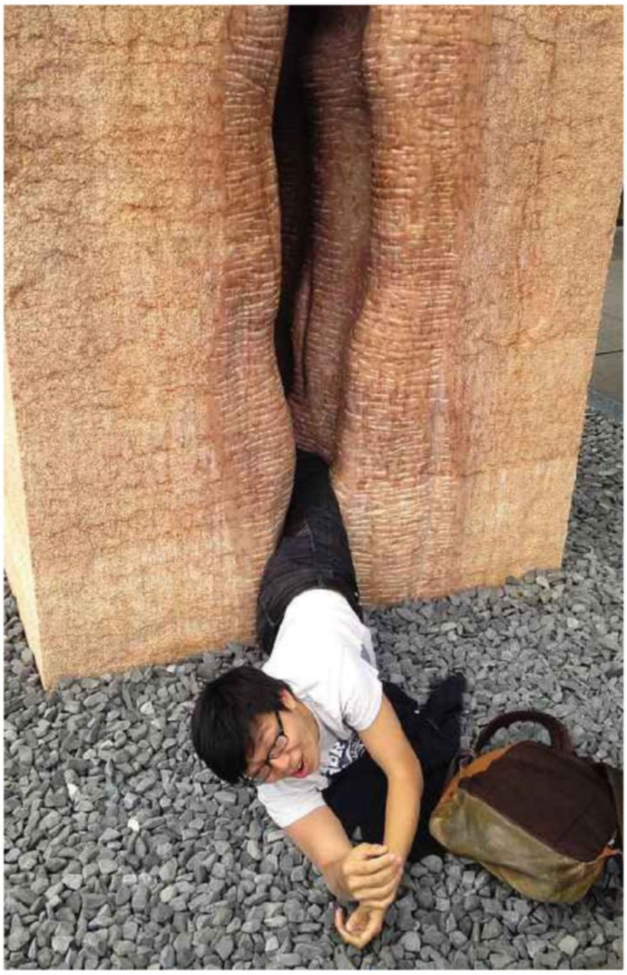
An expedition led by Dr Simon Lewis from the University of Leeds has discovered a peat bog in the Congo basin spanning up to 80,000 miles^2, (208,000km^2), 23ft (7m) deep, and dating back 10,000 years. This remote swamp the size of England will shed light on millennia of environmental change as peat preserves a record of climate. *Guardian, 28 May 2014*.

BEETLES KILL BEATLE TREE

A tree planted in memory of Beatle George Harrison has died after being infested by bark beetles. The 10ft (3m) pine tree was planted in Griffith Park, Los Angeles, as a tribute to the guitarist, who died of lung cancer in Beverly Hills in 2001. A new tree was to be planted on the same site. *Liverpool Echo, D.Mail, 23 July 2014.*

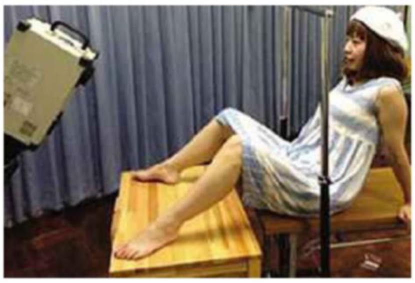
MARTIN ROSS

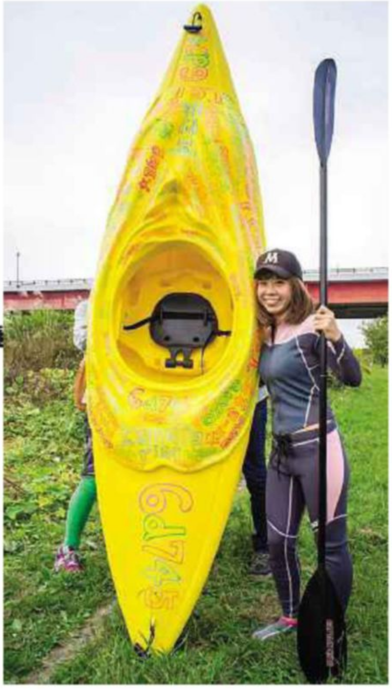
Privates viewing



Erick Guzman, an American exchange student, had to be rescued after becoming stuck inside a marble vagina in Germany. He climbed into the sculpture as part of a dare. It took 22 firemen and several paramedics two hours to haul him out, headfirst. The sculpture, by Peruvian artist Fernando de la Jara and called *Pi-Chacan* ("make love"), was erected in front of the Institute of Microbiology and Virology at Tübingen University in 2001. It weighs more than 30 tons. *Sydney Morning Herald, 24 June 2014.*

A Japanese sculptor and manga artist was charged with obscenity after making a kayak modelled on her vagina. Megumi Igarashi, 42, who worked under the alias Rokudenashiko ("good-for-nothing girl"), built the yellow vessel after raising about £5,800 through crowd-funding. She then sent 3-D printer data of her scanned pudenda – the digital basis for her kayak project – as a thank-you to a number of donors. On 12 July she was arrested for distributing indecent material and faced up to two years in prison and a fine of up to £15,000. More than 21,000 people signed on online petition urging the government to free her – which it did after six days, although she risked being formally charged later. *Guardian, 17 July; Japan Today, 19 July 2014.*

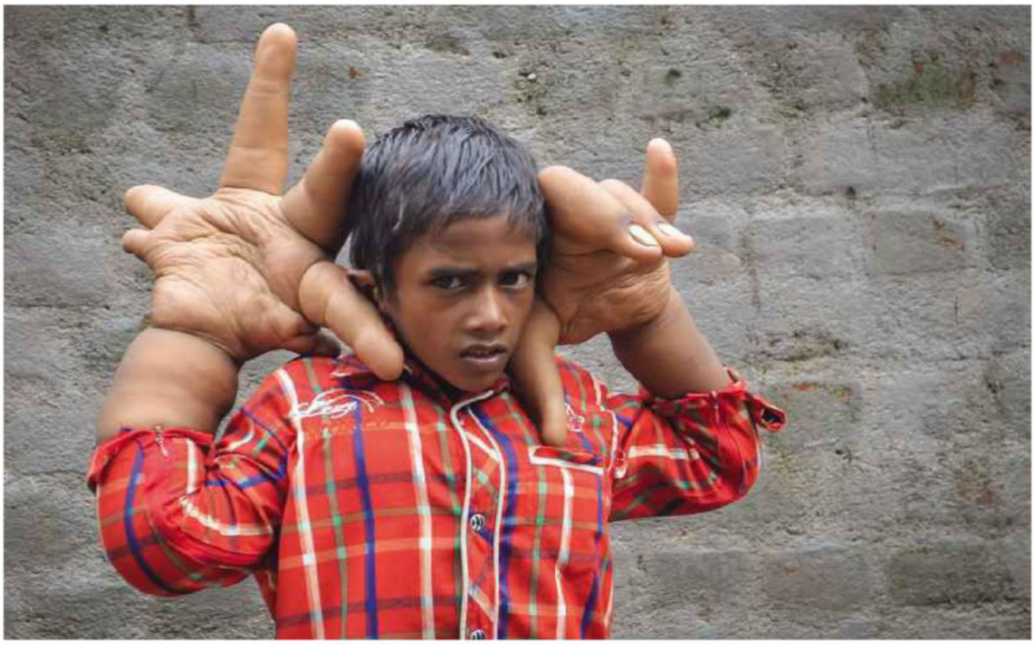




AFP / GETTY IMAGES

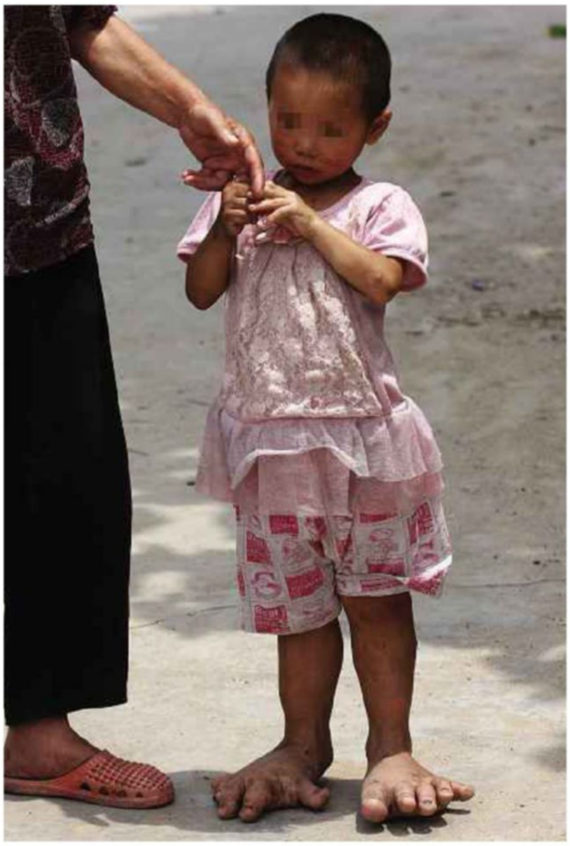
Extreme extremities

Undiagnosed conditions result in outsize appendages



BARCROFT INDIA

ABOVE: Mohammed Kaleem, whose hands are still growing. **BELOW**: The condition affecting Yu Yu's feet remains undiagnosed.



CHINAFOTOPRESS

BIG HANDS...

Mohammed Kaleem, an eight-year-old boy from Jharkhand, eastern India, has a rare but undiagnosed condition that has seen his hands grow to 13in (33cm) from the base of the palm to the end of the middle finger. Each weighs 18lb (8kg). Doctors warned that they are still growing and may put fatal pressure on his heart. Apart from this anomaly, he is in good health.

Mohammed cannot go to school in case he frightens other children or is bullied. He struggles with basic tasks and even needs help to eat – but his family is too poor to afford the treatment he needs. His hands also have unsightly growths. He may be suffering from either lymphangioma or hamartoma, both of which are treatable. *Sun, 19 Aug; MX News (Sydney), 21 Aug 2014.*

...BIG FEET

Two years ago, a three-year-old girl in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, China, was reported to be suffering from an undiagnosed condition that caused her feet to grow at an alarmingly rapid rate. Little Yu Yu was forced to go barefoot as her family were unable to afford shoes big enough for her. Her grandfather was planning to take her to Beijing to seek medical assistance after raising funds by selling several pigs. *mirror.co.uk, 14 July 2012.*

SIDELINES...

BEYOND A JOKE

Relatives of a six-year-old Bolivian girl who couldn't stop laughing feared that she was possessed – but Dr Jose Burgos Zuleta found she had a small brain tumour that, once removed, led to a full recovery. Now, said the doctor, "she only laughs for normal reasons". *D.Telegraph, 16 June 2014*.

DIMWIT AT THE WHEEL

A giraffe – one of two being transported blindfold in the back of a truck on a motorway near Johannesburg, South Africa – knocked its head and died on 31 July when the truck drove under a bridge. *Metro, 1 Aug 2014*.

FIRST STRIDES

What are believed to be the earliest pair of trousers in the world have been found in China. The wool trousers were discovered in the Yanghai tombs of Western China's Tarim Basin and have been carbon-dated to about 1000 BC. The design indicated that they belonged to a horse rider. *D.Telegraph, 5 June 2014.*

WINKLE PICKLER

A hospital porter (or nurse) purloined dozens of penises from dead patients and kept them in jars of formaldehyde. They were discovered in the bedroom of the unnamed 52-year-old Croatian "family man" after his house was raided over an unrelated incident. He worked at a city hospital in Slavonski Brod and had no criminal record. *inserbia.info, 14 Aug; Sun, 18 Aug 2014*.

Piccawilli

SIDELINES...

SOMETHING FISHY

A Vietnamese man attempted to smuggle seven tropical fish – all unidentified species of cichlid – from Australia into New Zealand, but was caught when customs saw liquid seeping from his bulging trouser pockets. He faced up to five years' jail or £50,000 fine under the Biosecurity Act. *Irish Examiner, 31 Aug 2013.*

INHABITED SOFA

Pauline and Bill Lowe, from Corringham in Essex, were frantic when Crockett, their 10-year-old grey tabby, disappeared. The cat had sneaked into a four-seater sofa the couple had given to a charity shop in Grays, Essex. He sat quietly inside the sofa for four days, and was only discovered a day later when the sofa's new owners heard meowing. *Metro, D.Express, 3 April 2014.*

PANTS TO HIM

Connor Greenslade, 19, who stole knickers and thongs from a woman's bedroom in *Pantside*, Caerphilly, has been jailed for a year. He was caught after leaving prints on a pair he dropped while escaping. *Sun, 11 June 2014.*

PIGS MIGHT FRY

About 400 pigs were in a metal barn in southern China's Hunan province when it was hit by ball lightning, instantly cooking 170 of the animals. Witnesses said some of them exploded. Farmer Lu Qingsheng's wife had been feeding the animals when the lightning struck. She was blasted off her feet, but survived. *MX News (Sydney), 31 July 2014.*

MARTIN ROSS

SPACED OUT

CHERRIES, SCOTCH AND GECKOS BOLDLY GO; PLANKTON ON THE SPACE STATION; MANAGUA'S METEORITE MYSTERY

FEDERALSPACE.RU

ROSCOSMOS

ABOVE LEFT: The geckos prepare for their sexy space odyssey. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The Photon-M4 landed, but the geckos were dead.

GECKOS' SPACE ODYSSEY

Five geckos launched into space were found dead on 1 September after 44 days in orbit. Roscosmos, Russia's Federal Space Agency, said the landing apparatus of the Photon-M4 satellite had returned to Earth as planned, falling into Russia's Orenburg region. With four female Mauritius ornate day geckos and one male on board, scientists had hoped to learn how near-zero gravity would affect their sexual habits. "The lizards died about a week before landing," said a spokesman for the Institute of Biomedical Problems (ISTC), adding: "It's still too early to talk about the cause of death."

An experiment with fruit flies was successful, the insects surviving and breeding. The satellite also carried mushrooms and seeds, which were sent to labs for investigation. Gerbils, newts, spiders, butterflies, snails and bacteria all successfully traversed the cosmos in 2007 when international scientists launched them from Russia for a set of 45 experiments. *Guardian, 2 Sept; D.Telegraph (Sydney), 3 Sept 2014.*

The geckos were found dead after 44 days in orbit

WELL TRAVELLED CHERRY STONE

A four-year-old cherry sapling, grown from a cherry stone that orbited the Earth for eight months aboard the International Space Station (ISS), suddenly produced nine flowers on 1 April 2014, a full six years ahead of its normal schedule, baffling Buddhist monks at the Ganjoji temple in Gifu, central Japan, where it is growing. "We are amazed to see how fast it has grown," said chief priest Masahiro Kajita. "A stone from the original tree had never sprouted before. We are very happy because it will succeed the old tree, which is said to be 1,250 years old."

The wonder pip was among 265 harvested from the celebrated *Chujo-hime-seigan-zakura* tree, selected as part of a project to gather seeds from different kinds of cherry trees at 14 locations across Japan. The stones were sent to the ISS in November 2008 and came back to Earth in July the following year with Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata, after circling the globe 4,100 times. Some were sent for laboratory tests, but most were ferried back to their places of origin, and a selection were planted at nurseries near the Ganjoji temple. By April this year, the "space cherry tree" had grown to around 13ft (4m) tall, and suddenly produced nine flowers – each with just five petals, compared with about 30 on flowers of the parent tree. It normally takes about 10 years for a cherry tree of the similar variety to bear its first buds.

Tomita-Yokotani, a plant physiologist, said it was difficult to explain why the temple tree has grown so fast because there was no control group of trees with which to compare its growth. She said cross-pollination with another species could not be ruled out, but a lack of data was hampering an explanation. "Of course, there is the possibility that exposure to stronger cosmic rays accelerated the process of sprouting and overall growth," she said. "From a scientific point of view, we can only say we don't know why."

The Ganjoji temple sapling is not the only early-flowering space cherry tree. Of the 14 locations in which the pits were replanted, blossoms have been spotted at four places. Two years ago, a young tree bore 11 flowers in Hokuto, a mountain region 70 miles (115km) west of Tokyo, around two years after it was planted. It was of a variety that normally only comes into flower at the age of eight. *[AFP] 11 April 2014.*

ORBITING SCOTCH

In October 2011, at the invitation of the Texas-based space research company NanoRacks, Ardbeg distillery on Islay in the Hebrides sent vials of unmatured single malt whisky, along with particles of charred oak, in an unmanned Soyuz rocket from Baikonur in

Kazakhstan to the International Space Station. This was part of an experiment to see how the spirits' maturation process is affected by the close-to-zero gravity of near space. The vials orbited the Earth's atmosphere at 17,227mph (27,723km/h) – 15 times a day for 1,045 days. Meanwhile, an identical bottle was houses at the distillery on Islay to act as a control. The extraterrestrially aged booze returned to Earth on 12 September, landing back in Kazakhstan.

"We'll be whizzing the samples off to Houston in Texas to analyse the results," said Mickey Heads of Ardbeg Distillery. "We're looking at the flavour compounds in the spirit, called terpenes. These are present in many foods and drinks and we'll be analysing those to see the difference between the spirit in the controlled experiment down on Earth and that which happened in the space station. It's really a long-term investigation into flavour and hopefully we can reveal new ways of creating extra special flavours." *CNET CBS News, 30 Aug; BBC News, 12 Sept 2014.*

PLANKTON SURPRISE

Following routine window cleaning on the International Space Station, Russian scientists found sea plankton among the samples gathered from the exterior surfaces. ITAR-TASS News Agency, which broke the news, said the discovery confirms "some organisms can live on the surface of the International Space Station for years amid factors of a space flight, such as zero gravity, temperature conditions and hard cosmic radiation." This is of huge significance for those who believe there could be life in space.

Stranger still, said Vladimir Solovyev, head of ISS's Russian segment and orbital mission, the plankton weren't native to Baikonur, Kazakhstan, whence the Russian modules of the station blasted off. He speculated that air currents might have carried the plankton into space. However, amid all of the excitement, NASA stated that they could not confirm the claims, while the actual astronauts aboard the space station have made no comment on the alleged discovery. A month later, Alisa Wilken, speaking on behalf of the German Aerospace Center (DLR), confirmed that bacterial DNA had been collected from the Space Station's exterior. However, she said the method by which the samples were analysed was disputed, as it was unable to detect all kinds of bacteria and it also couldn't determine whether the discovered bacteria were alive or not. Furthermore, the biomass extracted from such samples was extremely limited so that no further tests could be conducted on it; more samples would be needed. Whatever the outcome of such future tests, the fact that the bacteria made it to the Space Station at all is fairly mind-boggling. *theweek.com, 20 Aug; OpenMinds.tv, via Huffington Post, 20 Sept 2014.*

ABOVE: The Nicaraguan military investigates the mysterious crater near Managua.

METEORITE MYSTERY

Just before midnight (local time) on 6 September, something crashed into a wood near the international airport in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua – or at least there was a loud bang. "We are convinced that this was a meteorite," said Wilfredo Strauss (or Wilfried Strauch) of the Seismic Institute. Fortunately, in a sprawling city of 1.2 million people, no one was hurt. Residents heard a loud bang and reported a burning smell from liquid, sand, and dust blown through the air. They also felt the impact, which registered on local seismographs and left a crater 40ft (12m) wide and 16ft (5m) deep. The Seismic Institute registered two shock waves after the impact, the first one seismic, and the second stronger one from the impact of the sound – but oddly, no one reported having seen a fireball or anything else that usually accompanies falling space objects. Government expert William Martinez said it was not clear whether the meteorite had burned up completely or had been blasted into the soil. "You can see mirror-like spots on the sides of the crater from where the meteorite power-scraped the walls," he said.

Astronomer Humberto Saballos said the meteorite could have broken off from 2014 RC, a house-sized asteroid 65ft (20m) across, nicknamed 'Pitbull', that passed Earth at (much) the same time. Awkwardly, however, the Pitbull was beyond the Moon's orbit at the time of the explosion in Nicaragua, and came closest to Earth 13 hours later – at 18:18 GMT on 7 September, when it passed over New Zealand at a worryingly close distance of about 25,000 miles (40,000km). NASA is even sceptical that there was a meteorite at all. Could the crater have been caused by a man-made explosion, intentional or otherwise?

The asteroid was first discovered on 31 August and, at its closest approach, was about one-tenth of the distance from the centre of Earth to the Moon. It was noteworthy for appearing to rotate in only 15.8 seconds, 30 per cent faster than any other known asteroid. *[AFP] 7 Sept; BBC News, 8 Sept; Guardian, 9+12 Sept; The Week, 10 Sept 2014.*

SIDELINES...

PRICE OF AMNESIA

A 38-year-old Scottish woman went to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary suffering from shaking, incontinence and severe weight loss. An X-ray revealed a 5in (13cm) sex toy, which had been stuck inside her unknowingly since a drunken sexual encounter 10 years earlier. It had caused a bladder blockage, forcing urine into her kidneys, and had created a vesicovaginal fistula, causing urine to flow into the vagina. Possibly the first case of its kind, said the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* (June 2014).

BAD LUCK FOR BLACKIE

For centuries, black cats have faced hostility, even death, as a result of their association with bad luck, but now many are being abandoned because they don't photograph as well as their lighter counterparts, making them less popular with those posting 'selfies' with their pets on sites such as Facebook. The RSPCA said that 70 per cent of cats in their care are black, or black-and-white. *D.Telegraph, 30 July 2014.*

BUMPER HAUL

After nine earthquakes off Jersey in July, fishermen reported a bumper haul of lobster and crab. Residents of the Channel Island believe the lobsters were frightened out of their hiding places and into pots. "There was another earthquake about 10 or 12 years ago and it was similar then," said Don Thompson, president of the Jersey Fishermen's Association. *D.Telegraph, 5 Aug 2014.*

SWITCHED ON TO CASH

Following the implant of a brain pacemaker to combat an obsessive-compulsive disorder, a 58-year-old Dutchman woke up loving the music of Johnny Cash. He started listening to Cash non-stop until the pacemaker was turned off, whereupon he returned to his old musical preferences. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 22 May 2014.*

SIDELINES...

DOPE OF THE DAY

Lynette Rae Sampson, 54, from Enid, Oklahoma, faces up to 10 years in jail after phoning police to complain that the 'ice' (crystal methamphetamine) she had bought from a dealer was not of the quality she expected. *enidnews.com, 24 July; D.Telegraph, Metro, 1 Aug 2014*.

BREAD BOUNTY

Dressed in nothing but underpants, David Bastar stole a bakery truck in Manhattan while the driver was making a delivery. He then began delivering £5,000 of baguettes, rolls and sourdough bread to random businesses. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 24 May 2014*.

WORLD'S OLDEST SPERM

The world's oldest fossilised sperm, 17 million years old, has been found perfectly preserved in bat droppings at the Riversleigh World Heritage site in Queensland. Uncoiled, it is longer than the 1.3mm body of the ostracod (freshwater shrimp) it was found in – and much larger than a human sperm. *Int. Metro, 15 May; New York Times, 21 May 2014.*

STRANGE FRUIT

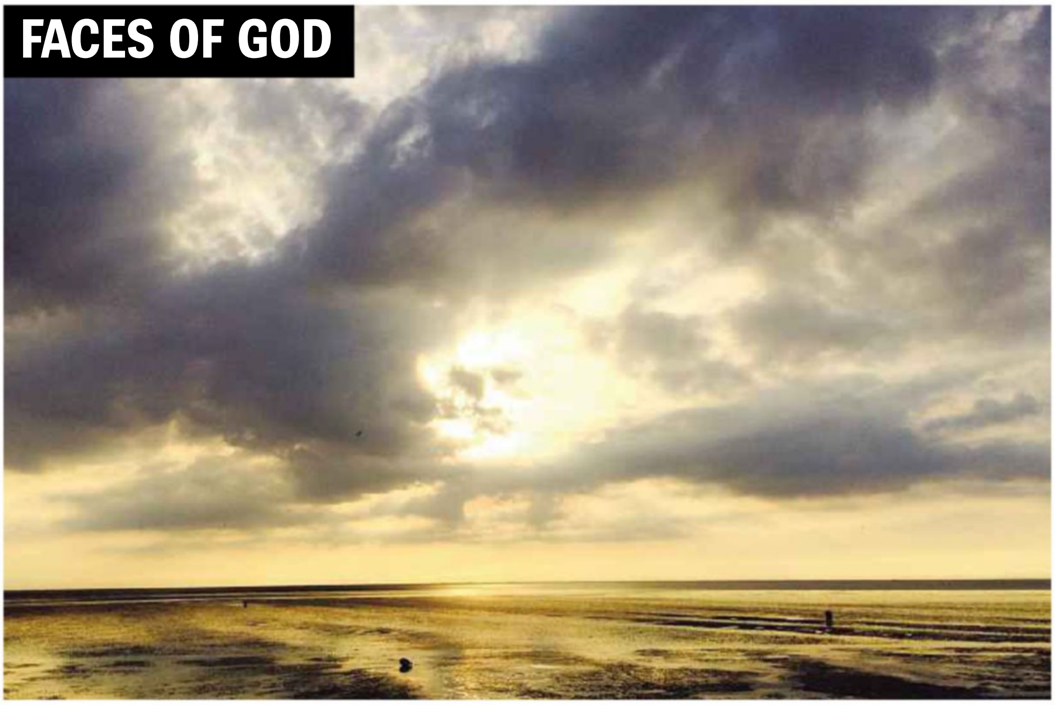
Workers clearing waste ground in Yonkers, New York, on 24 April found 25 dead cats with crushed skulls in supermarket plastic bags hanging from a tree. Some were recently dead, others mere skeletons. Investigators suspected they were linked to the discovery of 22 cats killed by poison in the area in 2013. *NY Daily News, NY Post, 26 April 2014.*

HEADS THEY LOSE

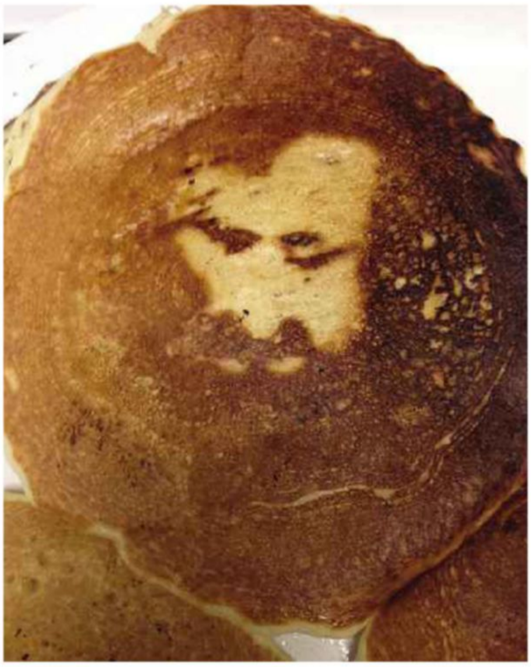
A black bin bag containing five severed cats' heads were found on 14 August dumped in a side street in the Rusholme area of Manchester, known as the city's "Curry Mile". It was understood that the heads are highly unlikely to be food waste because the effort required to kill and dispose of the cats would be far in excess of their value as meat. *D.Telegraph, 19 Aug 2014.*

MARTIN ROSS

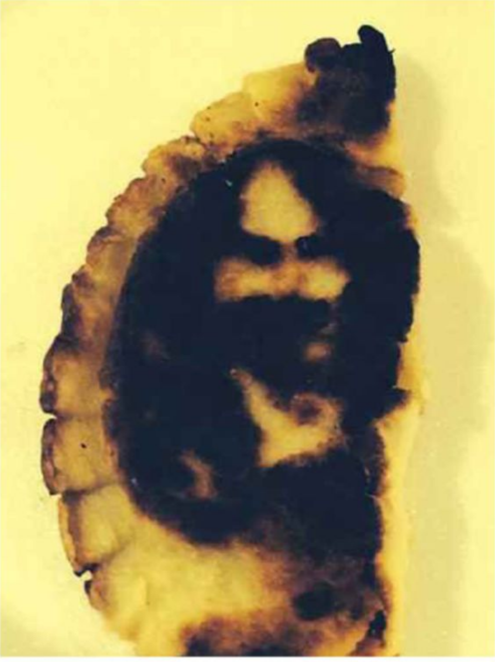
FACES OF GOD



JEREMY FLETCHER / KNSNEWS.CO.UK



REX FEATURES



GOD OVER NORFOLK

The face of God was spotted in the clouds above Snettisham on the coast of Norfolk by company finance director Jeremy Fletcher, 56, who captured the vision on his camera phone last July. Besides the Almighty, he also suggested it resembled Karl Marx or Sean Connery. *D.Mail, 23 July 2014.*

PANCAKE JESUS

Earlier this year, Karen Hendrickson says she prayed to God to watch over her restaurant – the Cowgirl Café in Norco, California – and a day later, on Good Friday, a waitress there spotted a bearded face on a pancake being served to a customer – and (naturally) assumed it portrayed Jesus. "I couldn't believe what I was seeing," said Ms Hendrickson. *D.Mail, 26 April 2014.*

HOLY PIEROGI

At this year's St Andre Bessette Church Festival in Ecorse, Michigan, Chairman Robert Heller was surprised when a fellow parishioner pointed out the "face of Jesus" on a somewhat burnt pierogi. "I was in the taco booth making tacos," he said, "when they came up to me and said 'Jesus loves Polish food more than Mexican food' and I asked why." Church members took it as a good sign, and planned to keep the holy pierogi in a freezer bag, although others have argued for a strong resemblance to Charles Manson or Frank Zappa. *WXYZ-TV; doubtfulnews.com, 9 Sept 2014.*

FREE DESIGNER SHADES WITH ORDERS OVER £50
MOBILE INFANTRY SERVICE GUARANTEES CITIZENSHIP M.I. WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE
WANT TO PLAY A GAME?
WHATS IN THE BOX..? WHATS IN THE..BOX
EATER OF WORLDS
NEVER GO FULL RETARD
OUTWARD BOUND ADVENTURES AINTRY COUNTY SQUEAL! like-a-pig
USCSS NOSTROMO
SEA SHANTIES
FURYAN
FLUX CAPACITOR 1.21
Bradise Camp Members Only
MONKEY BRAINS CHILLED
UMBRELLA CORPORATION
OCP
TITTY TWISTER
SHOP SMART SHOP S-MART HARDWARE DIVISION
MOS EISLEY CANTINA LIVE MUSIC NOW SHOWING FIGRIN D'AN AND THE MODAL NODES MOS EISLEY, TATOOINE
Woodbury GEORGIA
UNITED STATES ARMY Surf Team 1967 VIETNAM DA NANG BEACH
ZOMBIE. eat flesh.
WE'RE NOT IN KANSAS ANYMORE
BIG KAHUNA BURGER
MISSION TO LV-426 ...THEN BACK TO THE WINCHESTER
Bathroom Buddy Not just any old GIZMO
MISBEHAVE
NATIONAL SCIENCE INSTITUTE UNITED STATES STATION 4

NERDOH PRESENTS

T-SHIRTS TO MAKE YOU LAUGH, CRY AND SHIVER!

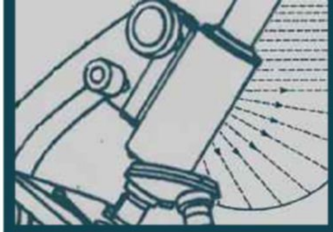
ALWAYS FREE UK P&P

STITCHED FROM SKIN & COTTON BY

WWW.NERDOH.COM

www.nerdoh.com

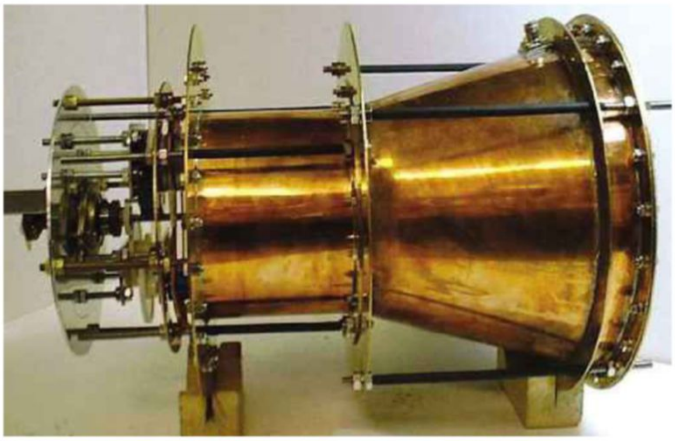
FREE UK DELIVERY TEL ORDERS: 0115 8440088 ALL CARDS ACCEPTED



MATT PATTINSON

IN SEARCH OF THE EMDRIVE

DAVID HAMBLING reports on how Chinese researchers appear to be moving forward with a project largely rejected by the scientific establishments of Britain and the USA



TOP: British engineer Roger Shawyer (left), inventor of the EmDrive.
ABOVE: A demonstration version of the controversial space propulsion unit.

Back in 2005 [**FT201:14**], *Fortean Times* described work by British engineer Roger Shawyer on a new type of space propulsion called the EmDrive. Nine years later, NASA finally appears to have validated the drive, and the world is waking up to the possibilities. However, while the US has taken its time, the UK has turned its back on Shawyer – and the Chinese appear to be way ahead.

The EmDrive poses something of a problem for conventional physics. It consists of a closed cavity wider at one end than the other, filled with resonating microwaves. According to Shawyer, it generates a net thrust. This is awkward because, according to the law of conservation of momentum, a closed system cannot produce thrust. Shawyer explains the apparent anomaly in terms of relativity, but his critics don't seem to be interested in explanations. The view is that it cannot work and is therefore not worth investigating – a view that persisted even after Shawyer built demonstration versions which appear to generate thrust.

Space drives fire exhaust backwards at high speed to propel a spacecraft or satellite forwards. They can only keep going for as long as the supply of propellant lasts; half the weight of a satellite may be propellant. Power is not the problem, as solar cells or atomic batteries can provide power indefinitely, but propellant is a limitation – unless you have a propellantless drive.

An article on the EmDrive in *New Scientist* magazine provoked a furious backlash from the scientific establishment. Shawyer had received a small grant from the Department of Trade and Industry, but now all official backing ceased.

The Chinese were not quite so sceptical. From 2008, a team led by Prof Yang Juan of the Northwestern Polytechnic University in Xi'an carried out their own EmDrive research. They persuaded the authorities that the principles of the drive were valid, and by 2013 Yang's team claimed to have built an EmDrive producing about 72 grams of thrust from 2500 watts of power, four times as efficient as the XIPS ion drive used on US satellites.

The replication of a result in a peer-reviewed scientific publication is a gold standard for scientific theories, but there was little response to Chinese EmDrive results. The consensus was as before: the theory must be wrong, and there must be an error in the experimental setup. There is also the unspoken assumption that a Chinese journal, even a respectable one like *Chinese Physics B*, is not as reliable as a Western one.

When David Willets, the Minister for Universities and Science, was asked what he was doing to ensure that the UK kept up with the Chinese in microwave propulsion, he replied: "While there remains some considerable doubts about this particular idea, the Government is investing more than £250 million a year in space technology including advanced electric propulsion." In other words, the EmDrive still had no credibility and no support in the UK.

Shawyer had sent a demonstration EmDrive to the US for testing in 2009; the results were never published. This time around, NASA's Advanced Propulsion Physics Laboratory under Harold G White took an interest. This is a group dedicated to far-out research like space-time engineering for warp drives. In July, five NASA researchers from Johnson Space Center produced a paper on "Anomalous Thrust Production from an RF [radio frequency] Test Device Measured on a Low-Thrust Torsion Pendulum."

The researchers had set up an elaborate experiment to test a version of the EmDrive based on the Chinese research. They spent two days taking measurements with various configurations, including replacing the drive with a resistive load and turning the drive around. Using a fraction of the power of the Chinese, they consistently measured a thrust of 30 to 50 micro-newtons, "a force that is not attributable to any classical electromagnetic phenomenon." The fact that they labelled the thrust as anomalous, and offered no theoretical explanation for it, showed that the NASA team had learned from Shawyer's experience. They were trying not to provoke the theoreticians.

The paper was slightly provocative though, in that it included an illustration of what the propellantless drive might do. Using calculations based on measured performance, it described a manned mission to Mars with a 90-ton spacecraft propelled by an EmDrive. The mission would take eight months, including two months on Mars. Conventional thrusters would take at least six months just to get there, and because of the need for propellant, several times as much mass would have to be boosted into Earth orbit to start with.

Unlike the Chinese research, the NASA paper received a massive amount of attention. Reactions ranged from the predictably sceptical to techno-optimists planning trips to the moons of Jupiter. However, the technology is still so controversial that not only will NASA not allow interviews on the topic, there has not even been a press release or public statement. The plan is for the experiment to be repeated at other NASA sites to see if the results can be replicated. If they are, then the circus will really begin.

Meanwhile Professor Yang's team in Xi'an have not published anything on their EmDrive since 2013, and Yang will not discuss her work. However, other papers suggest they are pushing forward with EmDrive technology. We won't really know if the technology works until it drives a satellite in space. And if it does – you read it in *Fortean Times* first!

David Hambling's new science fiction novella, *The Elder Ice,* is available now from Amazon.

HAVE A READ... IF YOU DARE!

More than 100 real-life stories that will make Hallowe'en seem like a walk in the park...

Phantom Templars

Haunted iPod

Talking cats

Graveyard witch

MAGBOOK
It Happened To Me!
REAL-LIFE TALES OF THE PARANORMAL
VOLUME 6
Ordinary people's extraordinary true stories from the pages of
ForteanTimes

Newcastle mothman

Teleporting spiders

Hounds from Hell

Aliens under the bed

AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...

AVAILABLE FROM AMAZON.CO.UK
OR VISIT MAGBOOKS.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION

amazon.co.uk

MATT PATTINSON

GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE checks into London's famous Langham Hotel to find some uninvited guests...

HOTEL HAUNTINGS

Despite the ease with which many people claim to effortlessly find paranormal manifestations, ghosts and hauntings do not come to order. But every so often a haunted site known from a generation or more ago suddenly produces a fresh crop of paranormal reports. Exactly this seems to have happened during the summer at the Langham Hotel, near Oxford Circus in London, where members of the English cricket team, and their wives and girlfriends, have been troubled by spooky goings on. Problems arose during the Test Match against Sri Lanka in June, when a number of players from the English team became "convinced" that this five-star hotel was haunted, with several requesting room changes and some finding their partners refusing to go there at all.

Speaking of his experiences in a bedroom in the Langham in June, England fast bowler Stuart Broad stated: "It was so hot in the room I just couldn't sleep. All of a sudden the taps in the bathroom came on for no reason. I turned the lights on and the taps turned themselves off. Then when I turned the lights off again the taps came on. It was very weird". His experience was shared by his girlfriend Bealey, who was "pretty spooked" by these incidents.

One another occasion at the hotel, Broad stated he had to move rooms because of odd sensations: "I woke up in the middle of the night, around 1.30am, and I was convinced there was a presence in the room. It was the weirdest feeling". Finding these feelings troubling, Broad put on the light and decided to view the Internet. Looking online, he realised that fellow team member Matt Prior was also online at the Langham. "I went to his room and he said exactly the same thing! He was wide awake as well. Neither of us could sleep because we were so spooked out." As Prior was occupying a twin room, Broad ended up staying in the spare bed, rather than return to his own bedroom. He added, "I don't know if it's because we're talking about it more that we're sensing more is going on, but it's weird. It's definitely caused a few sleepless nights."

Concerns are shared by partners of certain team members, some of whom have become so disturbed by the reports that they refused a stay at the Langham. These included "Moeen Ali's other half [who] won't stay there because she's so frightened of the ghosts", according to Broad. He was also quoted as saying: "Ben Stokes has had some problems sleeping as well. He's on the third floor, which is where a lot of the issues are."

Source: *http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/cricket/article-2698620/EXCLUSIVE-England-spooked-Ben-Stokes-Stuart-Broad-struggle-sleep-Langham-Hotel-s-GHOSTS.html 19 July 2014.*

Although relatively minor as haunting experiences go, the England cricket team members are certainly not the first to report uncanny manifestations at the Langham, and to identify them as being concentrated on the third floor. Back in the 1970s, the Langham was routinely used by the BBC as overnight accommodation and as a club for its staff, particularly announcers and presenters who worked on early morning radio shows. It was an open secret among BBC staff that Room 33 (as it then was) on the third floor was believed to be haunted. Today the Langham refers to this reputation – clearly the hotel is not afraid of its ghostly heritage – by stating in particular on its website that: "In 1973 BBC radio announcer James Alexander Gordon awoke suddenly in the night to see a fluorescent ball which slowly took on the shape of a man wearing Victorian evening wear. The announcer asked the ghost what it wanted and it began to float towards him, with its legs cut off some two feet [60cm] below the ground, arms outstretched, eyes staring... At this point the announcer got up and fled."

This is no mere invention or an advertising puff, and is consistent with stories collected directly from the broadcasters concerned 40 years ago. Gordon, veteran announcer of the football results who sadly died on 18 August this year, had two successive sightings of the Langham ghost early one morning in July 1973, soon after joining the BBC. A very short mention of his experience appeared in Jack Hallam's entry on the Langham in *Haunted London* (1976), including mention of Gordon hurling a boot at the figure. However, a fuller account was provided by Gordon for Richard Davis, author of the book *Ghosts I've Seen*: *True Stories from Show Business* (1979).

Describing the ghost for Davis, Gordon stated: "He was dressed in what I suppose one could describe best as Victorian evening wear with a cloak and a cravat, and I remember distinctly the tiepin attached to it". The figure appeared almost solid, but "I could still see the bedroom basin through him". Challenging the figure, Gordon called out: "Who are you, what are you, and what the hell do you want?", whereupon it advanced on his bed. As it moved towards him, Gordon became scared. "I think it was because his eyes were very, very piercing. I dived off the bed, grabbed one of my boots, and flung it at this 'thing' – and of course it went straight through".

Quickly pulling on his underpants, Gordon fled the room and sought out the commissionaire, who refused to leave his post. Returning to the room to retrieve the rest of his clothes, Gordon saw the figure was still there, though fading. Considerably unnerved, he went to the canteen, where he met

ABOVE: The Langham Hotel, where members of the England cricket team, including Stuart Broad (below), have had spooky experiences. **OPPOSITE:** Just around the corner, is Broadcasting House haunted too?

GETTY IMAGES

broadcaster Ray Moore who, it transpired, had also seen the ghost.

Gordon described his sighting as the only really frightening experience of his life, but he later regretted running away a second time, stating that in hindsight, he should have stayed to try and question it. He stated: "Several people have gone into the room and tried to entice the thing to show itself, but without success. It comes unbidden."

He later learned that several other announcers staying in Room 33 had also encountered the ghost. Ray Moore also witnessed it twice, once outside the window and once in the room itself. The first of these sightings was in January 1971. Getting up at 4.30am to do the Breakfast Special, he looked out of the window and saw "a biggish man, thick-set with a crew cut and wearing a uniform-style coat that buttoned up to the neck… surrounded by an aura of white light."

Like Gordon, he felt impelled to leave the room in a hurry. On another occasion, he saw the same figure appear actually in the room with him while he was shaving. These sightings were treated with scepticism and ridicule by some BBC colleagues, but Radio 4 newsreader and announcer Peter Donaldson spoke of poltergeist-like incidents when staying in Room 33, including a force pushing him on the bed, and of seeing a glowing light.

One point of note is a comment made by Ray Moore that: "If you happen to encounter the Langham's third floor ghost you're up long before the crack of dawn." (Quoted in Hallam, 1976). This is consistent with many reported cases of apparitions where the experiences involve visual imagery occurring before fully awakening from sleep. A preponderance of 'half-awake', so-called 'hypnopompic' states has been noted in studies of collections of apparitional experiences. Some surveys find that up to 70 per cent of the percipients had either just awoken or were in bed but awake when having their experience, as with Professor Hornell Hart's study in 1956.

The same connection was noted by GNM Tyrrell in his classic work *Apparitions* (1942), where he asserted that there were two stages in an apparitional experience. In the first stage, the percipient unconsciously experiences the apparition, and in the second stage the unconscious information is then processed into consciousness through dreams and certain waking experiences that resemble ordinary cognition.

A link with 'half asleep' or hypnagogic and 'half awake' hypnopompic states was also made by Andrew MacKenzie in *Ghosts and Apparitions* (1982), finding in his collection that about one third of apparitional experiences occurred just before or after sleep, or when the percipient was in a state of relaxation. Similar results have been reported for other types of entity experiences, often occurring when the percipient is alone, often when resting in bed. Experiences vary from dream-like or unrealistic impressions to vivid and realistic figures mistaken for actual persons. In light of this link, the over-excited atmosphere whipped up on many "true paranormal" investigation shows is entirely the wrong emotional atmosphere for actually witnessing an apparition. I have long noted that no one ever seems to see an apparition at breakfast time. None of the reported stories begin: "I was eating my cornflakes when I saw…" but usually earlier, before dawn. The period midnight to dawn or 'cock-crow' was the traditional time for seeing ghosts.

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

THE GHOST WAS LAST SEEN A COUPLE OF YEARS BEFORE THE START OF WORLD WAR II

Sources: 'Can we make progress with Apparitions?' by Peter Hallson, *Paranormal Review* (2002) No. 21, 3-5; 'Six Theories About Apparitions' by Hornell Hart (1956) in *Proceedings of the SPR* vol.50, 1953-6, pp.153-*239;* 'Survey of claimed encounters with the dead' by Erlendur Haraldsson, in *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying* (1988) 19, 103-113.

What was the same, or perhaps a different, male apparition in the corridors of the Langham was reported even further back in the history of the building. In his autobiography *No Common Task* (1983), ghost-hunter Peter Underwood recalled that after an interview with presenter Michael Aspel, he was put in touch with two witnesses who had seen the figure. One, a BBC engineer, took it to be a real person until it vanished, while another BBC staff member described the form "as completely lifelike but moving at an unnatural pace, so slowly that it was like watching a slow-motion film." The strange way that some apparitions may move has been noted by a number of scholars – e.g. GNM Tyrrell, op. cit; Hilary Evans *Seeing Ghosts: Experiences of the Paranormal* (2002).

These sightings may be of the same figure that ghost hunter Andrew Green learned of independently, through an interview with BBC Radio 2 presenter John Dunn. In his *Ghosts of Today* (1980), Green placed these sightings in the 1950s and cited one unnamed BBC employee who noticed that the figure appeared to limp, giving the impression that the man "had been wounded in the war. He seemed to have been the right age to have been in the services".

As to the origins of the haunting of Room 33, it has variously been attributed to a German military officer who committed suicide at the hotel before World War I, or to the ghost of a butler from the early days of the hotel. One uncorroborated tale is that the butler murdered a girlfriend in a bedroom which later became known as the haunted room.

This story might also account for the apparition noted by Green, of a woman reputedly seen in the Langham after 1974 wearing a "bluish gown, probably a nightdress" who was believed to haunt the building. However, a close reading of the account given by Hallam indicates that the ghostly butler – described as bewhiskered and carrying a tray – was not associated with the Langham but actually was regarded as haunting the corridor of the fourth floor of the BBC's headquarters at Broadcasting House, which stands close by.

According to Hallam, this ghost was last seen a couple of years before the start of World War II. Green's investigation found that "imaginative tales about the couple are, of course, rife", and it seems that stories of two adjacent haunted sites might have become mixed in the imaginations of BBC staff. This blending of different stories and tales often happens where no clear history or explanation is available for repeated unexplained experiences. Alternatively, it could be a case of the same ghost haunting two adjacent buildings or witnesses, familiar with both buildings, confusing the locations. Hallam learned that the ghostly butler had been seen in Broadcasting House by a sound engineer and a producer and by two pre-World War II radio personalities, compere Brian Michie and newsreader Lionel Marsen. Like the apparition inside the Langham, it appeared very life-like, with one witness even noticing a hole in one of the socks worn by the figure! This odd anecdotal detail, involving a feature that might ordinarily be difficult or even impossible to perceive, is also characteristic of a number of apparition reports. It suggests that the experience of seeing an apparition is a complex one, involving more than just normal perception by the human eye, as proposed by Tyrrell.

MATT PATTINSON

ARCHÆOLOGY

Our archæological round-up is brought to you by **Paul Devereux**, Managing Editor of *Time & Mind – The Journal of Archæology, Consciousness and Culture* (www.tandfonline.com/rtam)

GEERT VERHOEVEN

ABOVE: The Stonehenge Hidden Landscape Project employed ground-penetrating radar and other technology to produce 3-D mapping of 'lost' monuments at the site.

STONEHENGE CITY

Stonehenge is a monument that keeps on giving. In 2008, archæologists Timothy Darvill and Geoffrey Wainwright who had been excavating at the monument argued that it had functioned like a prehistoric Lourdes, a place for healing. Then, around the same time and subsequently, Mike Parker-Pearson and the Stonehenge Riverside Project team maintained, not necessarily contradictorily, that the place was in effect a huge cemetery linked with funerary rituals at the giant Durrington Walls henge situated not far away to the north-east along the River Avon. And only this year, your very own columnist and Jon Wozencroft, reporting on their Royal College of Art 'Landscape & Perception' project, pointed out that the bluestones at Stonehenge originated in rocky outcrops in Preseli, Wales, that are notably rich in ringing or musical rocks – a fact (not a mere theory) literally unheard of previously. Now, we have publication of two further sets of revelations.

English Heritage archæologists and personnel have recently reported (in *Antiquity*) on dry weather grass markings they call "parch marks" discovered at Stonehenge in the summer of 2014. A site steward, Tim Daw, was watering the grass in the monument but found that his hosepipe did not reach all the way across the ring of stones. At the end of his hosepipe tether, Daw found himself looking at dried circles of grass, and in a flash of inspiration figured they marked where standing stones had once been positioned. Archæologists later supported his observation. The find is significant because the presumed stone holes show that the now ruinous outer ring of sarsen stones at Stonehenge was once complete and truly circular, despite previous claims to the contrary from some scholars. Interestingly, earlier geophysical surveys had failed to reveal the stone holes, showing that important archæological findings can sometimes be made by simple, alert human observation without high-tech aids or digging. *Antiquity, vol.88, no.341, Sept 2014 (online earlier); BBC News, 30 Aug 2014; Guardian, 1 Sept 2014.*

The other current Stonehenge revelation did require high-tech methods, however – over the last few years the landscape surrounding Stonehenge and Durrington Walls has been subjected to a very high-resolution geophysical survey by the 'Stonehenge Hidden Landscape Project' undertaken by archæologists from Birmingham University and the German Ludwig Boltzmann Institute. The researchers used powerful ground-penetrating radar among other instrumentation. To the modern visitor, Stonehenge might seem to stand in splendid isolation, but the 3-D mapping produced by the project has revealed some 17 neighbouring, now 'lost', monuments that once existed long before – or contemporaneously with – the various phases of Stonehenge.

Among especially notable sites identified was what had been a 33m (108ft)-long trapezoidal timber building covering around 300m^2 (359yds^2) – a mighty long barrow some 6,000 years old, more ancient than Stonehenge itself. Other, previously unknown, nearby henges were also uncovered by the geophysical probing. A particularly fascinating find was the former existence of two deep pits at either end of the Greater Stonehenge Cursus, a nearly 2-mile (2.8km)-long, very mysterious, straight earthen avenue a short distance north of the monument. It has been found that alignments to the midsummer sunrise and sunset drawn through each pit respectively, meet, when extended, at the location now occupied by Stonehenge – at last a key explanation as to why the monument was sited where it is. But there is much more to learn from this research, and BBC2 TV has made a good start at its public exposition with two documentaries, 'Operation Stonehenge: What Lies Beneath', replete with startling computer reconstructions and links with related archæology in the Stonehenge landscape. *BBC News, 10 Sept 2014*.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Fossilised footprints of hominids – early species of humans – have of course been identified in various parts of the world (800,000-year-old examples have recently been found in Norfolk, for instance), and we have touched on the subject of fossilised footprints in previous columns, but now the currently best scientifically attested examples of the oldest impressions of ancestral modern human feet in northern Europe are to be found in Romania's Ciur-Izbuc Cave. About 400 were initially discovered in 1965, when archæologists considered they were about 10,000-15,000 years old, but recent radiocarbon dating of cave bear bones unearthed just below the footprints indicate that *Homo sapiens* made the tracks c.36,500 years ago, older even than those in the Chauvet Cave in France. Only 50 or so of the Romanian footprints now survive, and analysis of those indicates that six or seven individuals, including at least one child, entered the cave after a flood had coated its floor with sandy mud. A number of the fossilised impressions show toes, instep and heel – there is surely something inherently poetic about seeing human tracks left so long ago, yet looking as if they had been made only yesterday. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology, vol.155 no.1, Sept. 2014 (online 7 July); Science News, 17 July 2014; Daily Mail, 22 July 2014.*

CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

181: SAVILE ROW

Sexual abuse, especially of children, is an unpleasant topic. But historians must take the rough with the rougher. And, since Dan Davies has already got a book, *In Plain Sight: The Life and Lies of Jimmy Savile* (Duckworth, 2014) on how we now know the ways Jim really fixed it, this column can add the usual classical glosses.

For more details and references, see (eds.) Susan Deacy & Karen Pierce, *Rape in Antiquity: Sexual Violence in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Duckworth, 1997), along with Edward Harris's review-article, *Échos du Monde Classique/ Classical Views* 16 (1997), 483-96, online, as is a list of rape victims from ancient history and mythology. For the early Christian period see the online article 'Child sexual abuse: historical cases in the Byzantine Empire (324-1453 AD),' by John Lascaratos & Effie Poulakou-Rebelatou.

The Greeks and Romans had a 'rape culture'. Their mythology, when not absurd, is repulsive in its abundance of rapes both of boys and girls, men and women. Apparently, they saw nothing wrong in worshipping Zeus, Apollo and the other Olympian ravishers of humans. Myth and culture overlap to produce the 'rape' (seduction, really) of Helen as cause of the Trojan War and the 'rape' (abduction, Boko Haram style) of the Sabine Women by the earliest Romans. More obnoxious is the 'war rape culture', attested in the OT, Isaiah 13.16 and Zechariah 14.2 – "Their children shall be dashed to pieces, and their wives ravished" – and (various sources) Roman military rapes of (e.g.) Boudicca's daughters, sodomising of defeated Batavian rebels, and assaults on Gothic women and men in AD 378.

On the sexual abuse of children, see WJ Slater's 'Pueri, Turba Minuta,' *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 21, 1974, 133-41 online. By far the vilest offender is the aged emperor Tiberius who, reports the shocked Suetonius (ch44), trained little boys and even unweaned babies to fellate him. For good/bad measure, at a religious festival he raped the boy acolytes; when they protested, he had their legs broken. Women were also amongst his victims.

Dio Cassius (bk67 ch15 para3) records that Domitian's secret list of intended victims was filched from his bedroom by one of his little 'naked whispering boys', leading to his assassination by a group of those named. Exactly the same story is told by Dio (bk72 ch22 para4) and Herodian (bk1 chs16-7) of Commodus, the little hero here being his favourite eight-year-old catamite Philocommodus.

Roman love poet Propertius (2. 29) rhapsodises over a bedroom filled with naked imps. Catullus (poem 56) boasts of buggering a young boy he found in bed with his girlfriend. These versified braggings had a tradition back to the early Greek mercenary soldier-cum-poet Archilochus who, in a poem discovered and published only in 1974, gloats over his sexual assaults; the battered papyrus and ambiguous Greek have engendered much lubricious 'scholarly debate' over whether the rape was anal or vaginal, and whether enforced fellatio was also in play.

Book 12 of the *Greek Anthology* consists entirely of pæderastic poems, attributed to a certain Strato (date and details unknown). There's a translation of them, *Puerilities*, by Daryl Hine, more sprightly and frank than Roger Paton's Loeb, which renders the racier parts into Latin, also displaying traditional English hypocrisy. Paton calls the theme "a peculiar subject", the poems themselves "often very gross". But as William Calder has shown ('Ambivalent Loyalties', 1999), Paton himself moved in the Oscar Wilde and Oscar Browning circles, betook himself to the Greek islands out of the authorities' reach, and indulged in what was then dubbed 'Uranian Love'. This is all omitted from Paton's notice in the *Dictionary of British Classicists* (2004).

A sample of Strato, via Hine:

Cupid, who loves mankind to tantalise,
Sculpted Sotarchus' bum for fun in butter,
Provoking Zeus, those buns looked better
Than even Ganymede's ambrosial thighs (#37)

The frequent celebrations of boys' bottoms in this collection disproves those prim scholars who maintain that intercourse was intercrural rather than anal.

Modern gays often idealise Greek acceptance of homosexuality. In fact, there was a strict and off-putting carnal etiquette. Respectable liaisons were those between an adult and a pre-pubescent boy, the latter always passive in sodomy and supposed not to enjoy it. For a grown-up who allowed penetration, there was disapproval and mockery from the likes of Aristophanes in Greece and Tacitus in Rome. This ethos is fully explored by KJ Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Harvard, 1989), and James Davidson, *Greeks and Greek Love* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2007).

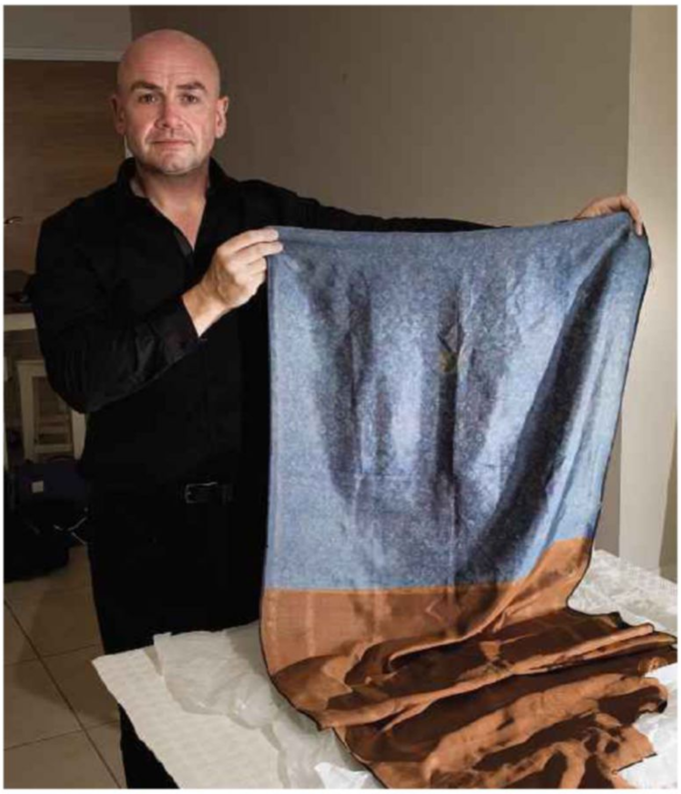
Hard to find much comfort in this subject, except Galen's chance remark (vol11 p724, ed. Kühn) that children were used (not abused) as hot-water bottles, this having biblical sanction apropos King David, 1 Kings 1. 1-4: "let [the damsel] lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat… the damsel was very fair… but the king knew her not."

Have to conclude that Savile and fellow-swine are part and parcel of the classical tradition, thus wiping away lingering use of the rose-tinted specs from the Glory That Was Greece and Grandeur That Was Rome crowd.

SPECIAL REPORT

THE SHROUD OF THE RIPPER

TOM WESTCOTT ASSESSES A NEW ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THE WHITECHAPEL MURDERS



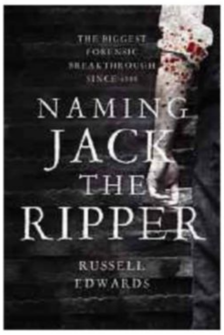
IAN MCILGORM

ABOVE: Russell Edwards, author of *Naming Jack the Ripper*, holds up the shroud.

Jack the Ripper finally revealed. How many times have we seen that in a headline? And, just like in the *Scream* movies, every time the mask is pulled off, we're met with a different face. So what sets this new sensation apart from, say, the 'Ripper Diary' debacle of the 1990s, Patricia Cornwell's one-woman campaign against artist Walter Sickert of almost a decade ago, or the post-Watergate 'royal conspiracy' nonsense of the 1970s? Two things: DNA and an actual, *bona fide* police suspect.

In keeping with past sensations, the man making the headline-grabbing claims is not an actual Ripperologist. That is to say, he has not spent years or decades studying the crimes, poring over old newspapers, or spending vast amounts of money on books and research materials. Instead, he chose to spend his money on an old shawl embroidered with a neat story – a story every bit as tantalising as it is sketchy.

The man in question is Russell Edwards, and his authorial debut is *Naming Jack the Ripper*, wherein he claims to conclusively identify the killer of at least five prostitutes in London's East End in 1888. Edwards is hardly the first author to become convinced by his own ideas and abilities and to sell the public a 'final solution' to the Ripper mystery; but he is the first person to state that through modern science he can now say with 100 per cent certainty that he has identified history's most notorious murderer.



Edwards's adventure begins with what has been known to Ripperologists since the 1990s as the 'Eddowes shawl', an 8ft long by 2ft wide shawl made of silk and cotton that has allegedly remained in the same family since 1888 when, family lore has it, the patriarch took the blood-stained garment from the crime scene of Ripper victim Catherine 'Kate' Eddowes. On the surface, this might seem to make a measure of sense as the patriarch in question was Metropolitan Police constable (and often acting sergeant) Amos Simpson. However, this is where the story takes a detour from logic.

In February of the present year, and before Edwards's intentions were known, I published a book entitled *The Bank Holiday Murders: The True Story of the First Whitechapel Murders* (reviewed in **FT318:61**), which presents much new and relevant information pertaining, in particular, to the early Whitechapel murders of Emily Horsnell, Emma Smith and Martha Tabram. The book includes a four-page appendix entitled 'The True Provenance of the Eddowes Shawl?' in which I conclude the shawl most likely had no connection to any of the Whitechapel murders, but if it had, it would have been in relation to the case of Emma Smith, who is known to have held a 'woolen wrapper' between her legs to staunch the flow of blood as she walked her final mile to London Hospital. This is the only time in the case a bloody shawl is mentioned. My new spin on the tale was the Smith connection. That the shawl had never belonged to Eddowes, let alone been pulled from her mangled corpse by PC Amos Simpson, was not my own idea, but was instead that rarest of commodities in Ripperology: a conclusion agreed upon by virtually everybody.

I'll quickly list just a few of the problems with the shawl story. First of all, PC Amos Simpson worked for the Metropolitan Police and Kate Eddowes was killed on City Police territory, 12 miles away from Simpson's beat, so he would have been nowhere near the murder scene. City PC Edward Watkins is the man who first discovered the body at 1.45am on the morning of Sunday 30 September; from that moment on, every aspect of the investigation is recorded from numerous witnesses, and at no point is Amos Simpson mentioned. Detailed sketches of Kate's body *in situ* in Mitre Square show no sign of any shawl, let along the cloth behemoth currently in Russell Edwards' possession. The beats of the constables in the area are known, and from the last time the square was checked until the murder was discovered, only six minutes had passed.

The Ripper really did a job on Kate, inflicting numerous mutilations, removing her left kidney and uterus, and even taking the time to nick her eye lids, carve chevrons into her face, and cut away a large portion of her filthy once-white apron, presumably to carry the offal away in. Why work so hard for half an apron when a perfectly good shawl is ready to hand? We're also expected to believe that inside this needle-thin six-minute window, there was also time for the Ripper to masturbate on the shawl and for Simpson to slip in and make away with it.

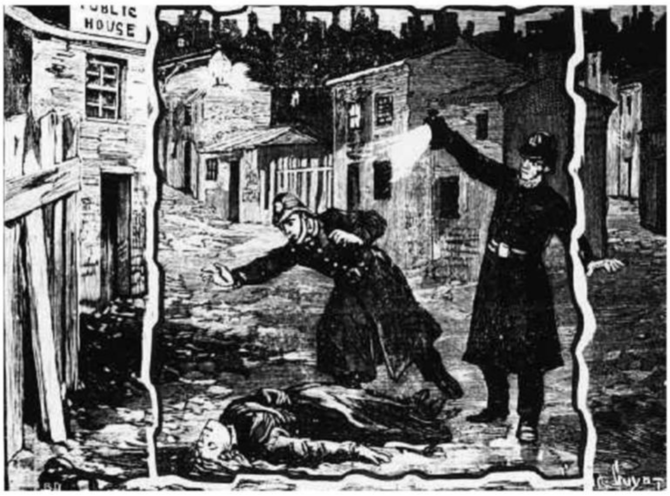
It's also worth mentioning that when the experts at Sotheby's were asked to offer an opinion of when they felt the shawl had been manufactured, they dated it to the early 20th century. While that is merely educated opinion, and Edwards attempts to work around this in his book, it is but one more hurdle for the reader to overcome in considering whether this shawl has any connection whatsoever to the Ripper case.

Catherine Eddowes was what we'd today call a homeless person. She had an alcohol problem, did not maintain steady employment, and lived with her long-term boyfriend in a common lodging house.

As with most women of similar circumstances, everything she owned she carried with her. Only days prior to her murder, Kate's partner, James Kelly, was forced to pawn his only pair of boots so that he could afford a bed for the night. They had just returned on foot from a trip picking hops in the country and either had not made any money or had drunk the earnings. It's absolutely unthinkable that two people so impoverished could have held onto a valuable item such as this shawl for longer than five minutes before rushing to the nearest pawn shop. Following her murder, Kelly looked through Eddowes's belongings, even digging through the folds in her bonnet in search of any money she might have tucked away. At no point did he inquire about a missing shawl.

Since history says Eddowes did not own the shawl, Edwards instead tries to put it in the hands of her killer, whom he says was Aaron Kosminski. Of course, this raises the question of what kind of prostitute would go into a dark corner with a man wearing a long woman's shawl. In fact, it raises quite a few questions. And the waters get muddier.

Aaron Kosminski is a legitimate, if not altogether convincing, police suspect. At 23, he's a bit too young in the minds of many to have pulled off these murders. Nevertheless, Sir Robert Anderson, the Assistant Commissioner of Police at the time, stated in his memoirs that he knew the identity of the Ripper and that he was a Polish Jew. He did not name the suspect, but his loyal subordinate, Chief Inspector Donald Swanson, made notes in his copy of his old boss's book and named the suspect merely as 'Kosminski', with no first name. He did not offer an opinion as to Kosminski's candidature for the Ripper. Research in the 1980s put forth Aaron Kosminski as the most likely candidate for Anderson's suspect. Another man in the inner circle was Swanson's other superior, Chief Constable Melville Macnaghten, who wrote that he didn't think Kosminski was the Ripper at all. We do not even know why Kosminski was suspected in the first place. All we have are two men working together in the years following 1888, one of whom likes Kosminski for the murders, and one who doesn't. Each policeman had his own opinion as to who the Ripper was and rarely did any two agree.



ABOVE: The discovery of one of the Ripper's victims, most likely Catherine Eddowes.

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

The Ripper removed her left kidney and uterus

In spite of the shawl's abysmal provenance and the dearth of any historical evidence that should lead us to conclude Kosminski was a likely Ripper, it might be argued that neither of these matter if the science proves beyond any doubt that Aaron Kosminski and Kate Eddowes deposited their DNA on that shawl in the year 1888. Indeed, that is what Edwards claims. But new developments are coming to light almost daily, and some of these give us reason to be sceptical.

In 2011, an Australian documentary entitled *Prime Suspect: Jack the Ripper* was produced that attempted to compare DNA from the shawl to non-starter Ripper suspect Frederick Bailey Deeming. This video is available free online and makes for interesting viewing. It was during the course of this production that Russell Edwards (who was only a participant in the programme and did not believe Deeming was the Ripper) met Dr Jari Louhelainen, the man who a few years later would (according to Edwards) prove with 100 per cent certainty that Kosminski was the Ripper. Technology must have advanced considerably in three years, because according to the documentary, a comparison of the shawl's DNA to Deeming's was not possible because "contamination has delivered an inconclusive result." Deeming's DNA was extracted directly from his skull, so the contamination appears to refer to the shawl. This is no surprise, considering the item has been handled without thought for the last 126 years and must contain the DNA of dozens if not hundreds of individuals.

But giving Dr Louhelainen the benefit of the doubt, as his reputation and standing suggests we should, perhaps the new and experimental techniques he employed will be conclusive. The problem is, we may never know, because Louhelainen has not yet had the work peer reviewed. What we do know is that the tests did not involve nuclear DNA extracted from either Eddowes or Kosminski, but instead relied on mitochondrial DNA from living descendants.

As to where Louhelainen stands on the matter, he has not been shy about talking to the media in recent weeks and appears to be the calm voice of reason. One of Finland's largest newspapers, the Swedish-language *Hufvudstadsbladet*, ran a piece entitled "Jack the Ripper Scientist Tones Down the Results", which quoted Louhelainen as follows: "I was surprised at how the writer, the publisher and public relations bureaux wanted to get everything out of this. Already the back cover revealed that they wanted to take advantage of me by claiming that the mystery has now been scientifically solved… I have said in numerous interviews that the evidence would not suffice to put Jack the Ripper before a court of law".[1]

Regardless of how the science turns out, Kosminski remains a legitimate and interesting individual worthy of further research.[2] But did he carry an 8ft shawl to Mitre Square and conveniently deposit his semen between swatches deeply stained with Catherine Eddowes's blood? History says no, Dr Jari Louhelainen says maybe, and Russell Edwards says absolutely. That leaves us only with the certainty that if all three ain't lining up the same, we don't quite yet have a Jackpot.

NOTES

[1] Translation by Christer Holmgren

[2] For a more historical argument in favour of Aaron Kosminski as the Ripper, I highly recommend *Jack the Ripper: The Case for Scotland Yard's Prime Suspect*, by Robert House.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & FURTHER READING

For their help in putting this report together, I'd like to thank Debra Arif, Neil Bell, Christer Holmgren, and Mick Reed. For further reading on the Ripper, I recommend my own book (surprise!) and Neil's upcoming tome, *Capturing Jack the Ripper*; and feel free to drop by and say hi to us at JtRForums.com and Casebook.org.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Tom Wescott lives in the Midwestern United States and is the author of Amazon bestseller, *The Bank Holiday Murders: The True Story of the First Whitechapel Murders*, available in paperback and Kindle editions. He also contributes to *Ripperologist* magazine and can be found on Facebook at Ripperbooks and on twitter at @ Ripperbook.

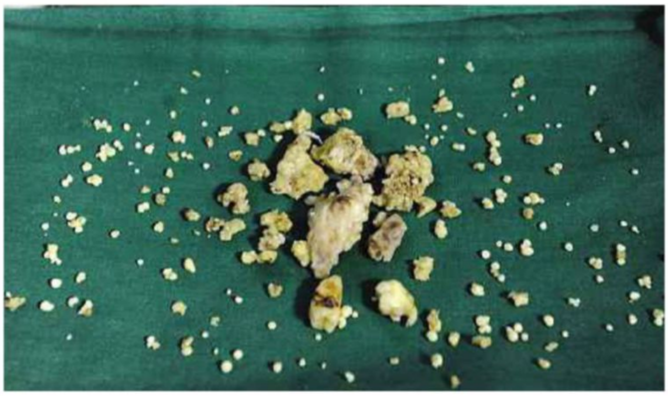
MEDICAL BAG

An Indian teen with too many teeth, a Chinese woman with a missing cerebellum, a baby born without blood and another with no nose

DENTAL ABUNDANCE

Surgeons in Mumbai, India, have removed 232 teeth from the mouth of an Indian teenager. Ashik Gavai, 17, (pictured right) sought medical help for a swelling on the right side of his lower jaw, which his family feared might be a cancerous growth. The case was referred to the city's JJ Hospital, where they found he was suffering from a condition known as complex composite odontoma. "We operated on [21 July] and it took us almost seven hours," said Sunanda Dhivare-Palwankar, head of the dental department. "We thought it might be a simple surgery but once we opened it there were multiple pearl-like teeth inside the jawbone." After removing those, they also found a larger "marble-like" structure, which they struggled to shift and eventually had to "chisel out" and remove in fragments. The surgery involved two surgeons and two assistants.

Ashik, a student in the Vidarbha region of eastern Maharashtra, now has 28 teeth. He had noticed the painless growth a few years ago but chose to ignore it. He is expected to make a full recovery without any deformities. Dhivare-Palwankar said the medical literature on the condition showed a maximum of 37 teeth being removed in such a procedure, whereas she and her team had counted more than 230 taken from Ashik's mouth. "I think it could be a world record," she said. *BBC News, 23 July; [AFP] 24 July 2014.*



BOTH PHOTOS: AFP / GETTY IMAGES

After suffering from nosebleeds once or twice a month for three years, a 22-year-old man in Saudi Arabia was found to have a white bony mass, about a centimetre (half an inch) long, in his nose. Dental specialists concluded that this was an extra tooth that had somehow ended up growing in his nose. The man had a well-aligned and complete set of teeth in his mouth. The extra tooth was pulled out under general anæsthesia, and the man had no more nosebleeds in the three subsequent months. Extra teeth are not that uncommon, and may even grow upside down, but they rarely grow all the way into the nasal cavity. It's not clear why some people develop extra teeth, or how one can erupt and reside in the nasal cavity – but genetic factors are thought to play a role. *American Journal of Case Reports, July; Live Science, 7 Aug 2014.*

BORN BLOODLESS

Maisy Vignes was born six weeks premature in December 2009 with no blood in her body, as it had all been absorbed by her mother, Emma, 31, during pregnancy. All she had in her veins was a thin plasma substance – but she survived, despite doctors describing her condition as "unheard of". It was feared that the baby would be brain damaged after being starved of oxygen in the womb. She spent two weeks in intensive care, during which she received three blood transfusions, but has since passed all her developmental milestones and is now, aged four, impressing her teachers at school.

"It was an unbelievable situation," said Mrs Vignes, from Tramore in Co Waterford, Ireland. "None of the consultants had ever heard of anything like it happening before. There were previous cases of children being born with tiny amounts of blood, but Maisy had a hæmoglobin level of flat zero." Mrs Vignes experienced a problem-free pregnancy until the 34th week, but then, she said, "I was experiencing worrying bloating and Maisy had stopped moving completely." Attending hospital the next day, she was given an emergency cæsarean section. *D.Telegraph, 19 Sept 2014.*

Surgeons removed 232 teeth from the teen's mouth

MISSING CEREBELLUM

After a month of nausea and vomiting, a 24-year-old Chinese woman visited hospital, where brain scans showed that her cerebellum was entirely missing. She said she had experienced dizziness her entire life, didn't start walking until she was four, and had never been able to walk steadily. The scans showed a large hole at the back of the skull filled with cerebrospinal fluid.

The cerebellum (Latin for "little brain") is responsible for coordination and fine movements, such as the movements of the mouth and tongue needed for producing speech. People with damage to this brain area typically experience debilitating motor difficulties; yet contrary to expectations, the Chinese woman's absence of the cerebellum resulted in only mild to moderate motor problems and slightly slurred pronunciation, demonstrating the plasticity of the brain early in life. "It shows that the young brain tends to be much more flexible or adaptable to abnormalities," said Dr Raj Narayan, a New York neurosurgeon who wasn't involved with the woman's case.

There have been eight other similar cases of missing cerebella reported, but most involved infants or children who also showed severe mental impairment, epilepsy and large structural abnormalities in their brains, and most did not survive the condition. *Brain (journal), 22 Aug; livescience.com, 11 Sept 2014.*

NO NOSE

Tessa Evans, aged 17 months, was born without a nose. She has complete congenital arhinia, which is so rare that there have been only 47 recorded cases in Britain. The toddler – from Maghera, Co Derry – has no sense of smell and no sinuses, but she can cough, sneeze and catch a cold. She was due to have a prosthetic nose fitted later this year. *Metro, 15 July 2014.*

HEARING THINGS

Faith Watson, a 20-year-old model from Suffolk, suffers from misphonia – an intolerance to certain sounds that means the slightest chomp or chew by her partner Dave Scott could ruin an evening out. "Certain noises make me feel like strangling someone," she said. "If Dave and I go to a restaurant, there needs to be music on in the background so I don't have to think about the noises he or other people are making." Watson was forced to drop out of college after suffering years of torment from classroom noises, saying even the sound of someone tapping a pen or chewing gum would "drive me crazy". The condition, which wasn't diagnosed until she was 18, dominated her life and the decisions she made, resulting in her being put on antidepressants because of the anxiety it caused. *MX News (Sydney), 12 Feb 2014.*

A hairdresser with a rare brain tumour hears people's voices as Daleks, the famous *Doctor Who* robotic villains. Katie Barnes, 46, from Northfleet, Kent, started having hearing problems and losing her balance two years ago. "I had a constant ringing in my left ear and everyone sounded like Daleks. I was terrified of them as a child and used to hide under my bed. Now I have to hear them all the time." Doctors sent her for a scan and found a tumour on her brain's acoustic nerve, near the ear. She had radiosurgery in January to stop the tumour from growing, but has had to quit work and now needs a walking stick. "Luckily the tumour is benign, but it's just on the edge of my brain stem so it's going to be watched very closely," she said. "Unfortunately everyone still sounds like a Dalek, but I'll just have to get used to it." Her hearing and balance will be affected for the rest of her life. *Sun, 24 July 2014.*

ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden

This month's Alien Zoo is a man-beast special, devoted to two separate stories concerning such entities that have generated considerable interest in the media lately, albeit for very different reasons

HAIR TODAY, YETI TOMORROW?

During October 2013, the British television station Channel 4 broadcast a fascinating three-part documentary series entitled *Bigfoot Files*, in which Oxford University human geneticist Prof. Bryan Sykes investigated the man-beast phenomenon by examining via ribosomal mitochondrial DNA sequencing a selection of hair samples allegedly derived from three different examples – the Himalayan yeti, the North American bigfoot (sasquatch), and the Russian almasty. In each case, the hair samples had been donated by museums and individual collectors; when analysed they proved to have derived from a number of different species.

All the supposed bigfoot hairs and almasty hairs were revealed by Prof. Sykes to be from known, familiar species, including various domestic and wild animals. However, the yeti samples threw up a very unexpected and quite extraordinary surprise of the cryptozoological kind. Two hairs obtained from two widely separated localities within the Himalayas (Ladakh and Bhutan) were shown by Sykes to contain genetic material that provided a perfect (100 per cent) DNA match with that of an ancestral, Palæolithic (40,000+ BP) form of polar bear *Ursus maritimus* – one that (unlike the modern-day version) had been native to the Himalayas, but which was hitherto believed to have gone extinct several thousand years ago!

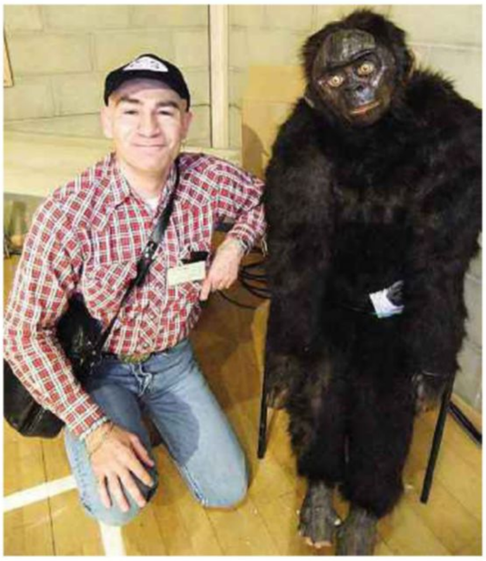
Sykes offered two alternative explanations for this remarkable discovery. Either the Palæolithic polar bear (believed to have descended from the brown bear *U. arctos*) did still survive in the Himalayas after all; or it had interbred with the brown bear during the early stages of species divergence between polar bear and brown bear and, although subsequently dying out as a separate form in its own right, had left behind its genes within a surviving Himalayan ursine strain resulting from this hybridisation. Whichever is the correct solution, however, it means that despite the most popular cryptozoological identities for the yeti having traditionally been various species of known or unknown primate, it would now seem that at least some yeti reports may have featured this previously cryptic bear instead. Moreover, having descended directly from the brown bear, the Palæolithic polar bear may also have been brown-furred (rather than white-furred, which might have been a much later evolutionary development), thus corresponding with many yeti reports in which this cryptid has been said by eyewitnesses to be brown. The research by Sykes and his team has been formally published in full within the mainstream scientific literature. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London (Series B, Biological Science)*, vol. 281, 14 July 2014.

A MAN-BEAST MURDERED IN BORNEO?

Kalimantan is the major, Indonesian portion of the southeast Asian island of Borneo, and according to reports disseminated by its press a short hairy man-beast with a human face, hands, and feet was recently shot by Dayak villagers in the mountainous region of Kinabalu, after it had terrorised them for several weeks. Chief among its misdeeds were its attacks on three villagers and its unsuccessful attempt to kidnap a three-week-old baby. The man-beast had prominent breasts, suggesting that it was a female, so perhaps it had lost its own infant and sought to take the human baby and rear it as its own instead. Comparable incidents have been verified with chimpanzees and baboons in the wild.

After it was shot, the creature fled into the jungle, where its dead body was later discovered by villagers, who duly buried it with an extremely large, heavy rock placed on top of its grave to ensure that it could not return to haunt the village as a ghost. Villagers have claimed that the Indonesian army subsequently visited the site, dug up the carcase, and took it away, after threatening the villagers not to say anything about it. Although the Kalimantan media have dismissed the entire story as a mere folktale, no fewer than 23 villagers claim to have attended the creature's burial, and Australian anthropologist Jim McFurrow, who has been studying this region of Borneo for 20 years, has stated that telling lies is a major social taboo for this Dayak tribe, and that breaking it can result in being expelled from their community for lengthy periods of time. But if they were indeed telling the truth, what could the entity have been? Borneo has long been the site of reports describing a short bipedal man-beast comparable to Sumatra's *orang pendek* (a model of which is shown below; he's the one on the right) but known as the *batutut*.

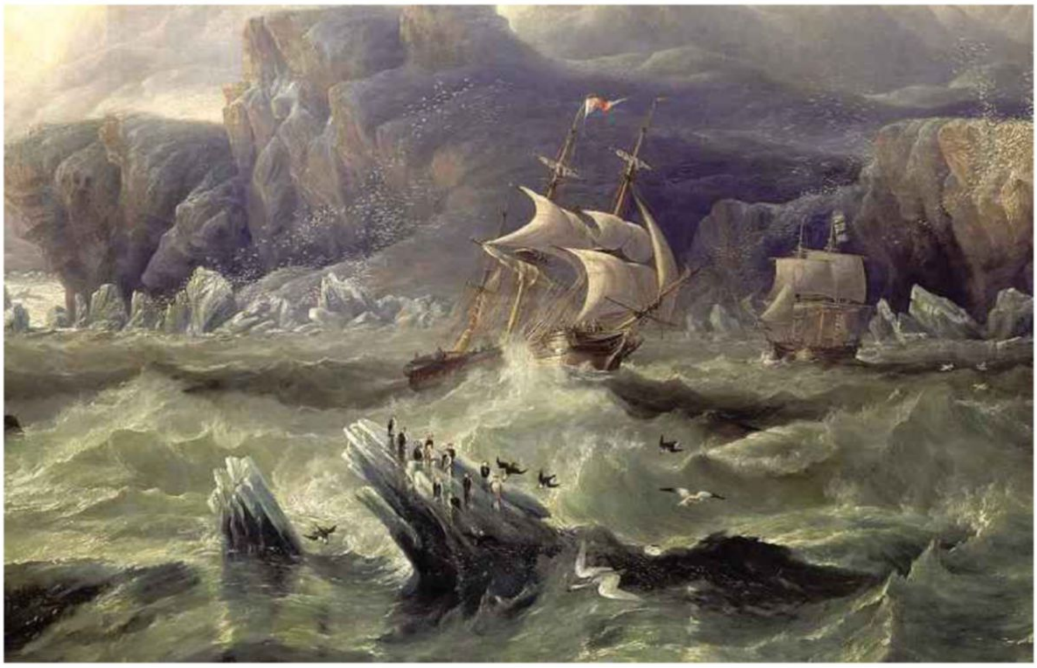
So is this what the army confiscated – the recently deceased, cryptozoologically priceless corpse of a Bornean *batutut*? No, it isn't – because although this story has been widely circulated online and seriously discussed in cryptozoological groups and social forums, it is in reality a total fabrication. It originated not in the Kalimantan press but in the *World News Daily Report* website, which actually includes for all to see a disclaimer revealing that all of its reports are fictitious, but which appears to have been entirely overlooked by those who believed this article to be true. However, having now (I hope!) conclusively debunked it, RIP the dead *batutut* that never lived. *http://worldnewsdailyreport.com/indonesia-ape-man-creature-shot-down-in-borneo-jungle/ 14 Sept 2014; http://badsatiretoday.com/indonesia-ape-man/ 15 Sept 2014.*



KARL SHUKER

Franklin vessel located

One of the two Royal Navy ships lost since 1845 is found in the Arctic



ABOVE: *HMS Erebus and Terror in the Antarctic* by John Wilson Carmichael. **BELOW:** A sonar image showing one of the two ships.

One of the most enduring and tragic mysteries of British maritime history came a crucial step closer to being solved on 9 September when Canada announced the discovery, just off King William Island at a depth of 36m (118ft), of a Royal Navy vessel that disappeared in the Arctic nearly 170 years ago. The *HMS Erebus* and *HMS Terror* were last seen in 1845 under the command of Sir John Franklin on a doomed Admiralty expedition with 128 officers and men to survey the magnetic field and look for the legendary Northwest Passage of ice-filled waters linking the Atlantic and Pacific. The two ships were last seen by European eyes in July that year, awaiting favourable conditions near Baffin Island. Their disappearance launched one of the largest rescue operations in history, lasting from 1848 to 1859. The vessels were never found, but the searches did result in the discovery of the fabled passage through the Arctic archipelago.

Inuit hunters told a Scottish explorer in 1854 that the ships had become icebound. They said the crew had tried to escape on foot but were defeated by the cold and some had resorted to cannibalism to try to survive – a report that caused outrage when it reached London.

European explorers had been frustrated in their efforts to find the Northwest Passage as a shorter route to Asia since John Cabot died on an exploratory voyage in 1497. Roald Amundsen of Norway finally completed the first trip in 1906. As part of a strategy to assert sovereignty over the disputed waters of the Northwest Passage, now navigable because of melting Arctic ice, the Canadian government launched a fresh search operation in 2008 to find Franklin's ships, which were believed to have become trapped in ice off King William Island in the Victoria Strait in the Arctic territory of Nunavut before being carried for many miles. Conflicting reports handed down through local tribal communities about where the vessels sank meant that the new generation of explorers were targeting a huge and inaccessible search area.

Franklin's men had been carrying portable 'joints' of their shipmates to sustain them

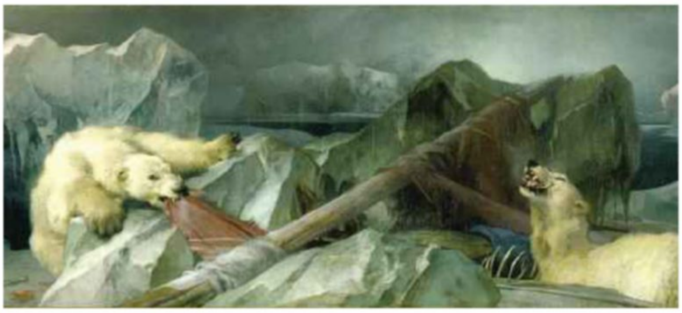
Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper said that the wreck of one of the missing vessels has now been located by Parks Canada, the national parks agency, using a recently deployed, remotely operated underwater vehicle. Although it was unclear which ship had been found, the sonar images contained enough information to confirm that they showed one of the pair, and that it was remarkably well preserved. The deck structures were intact, including the main mast, which was sheared off by the ice when the ship sank. The underwater archæologists expected the ship's contents to be in similarly good condition. "Finding the vessel will no doubt provide the wind in our sails necessary to locate its sister ship and find out even more about what happened to the expedition's crew," said Mr Harper.

On 9 September, the Nunavut government announced the discovery of an iron fitting and wooden artefact from a Royal Navy ship on an island in the southern search area. Other traces of the expedition have been found over the years. According to a solitary record of the expedition discovered in 1959, rolled up in a tin buried in a cairn, Franklin spent the winter of 1845-46 on Beechey Island, where three crew died from a combination of ailments, before pushing on towards his objective. But in September 1846 the ships became trapped in pack ice. Franklin himself died on 11 June 1847, his resting place unknown. His crews braved another winter on the island before surviving officers and men set off for the mainland on foot on 22 April 1848. All perished along the way. Their bones, strewn across a vast and unsympathetic landscape, have helped tell the tale. In 1981, an expedition found a human femur displaying signs of knife cuts, a broken skull and a disproportionate quantity of limb bones. These suggested that Franklin's men had been carrying portable 'joints' of their shipmates to sustain them on their do-or-die march. A few years later, the frozen remains of the three crewmen who had died on Beechey Island were recovered: William Braine, John Hartnell and 20-year-old petty officer John Torrington had been perfectly preserved in their graves by ice. A fresh discovery in 1992 uncovered more evidence of cannibalism, including bones cut to expose marrow.

Franklin was undertaking his fourth Arctic expedition when his team perished. His two vessels were equipped with the latest in nautical technology for the arduous conditions, a water distillation system and three years' worth of preserved and tinned food supplies. In 1847, his wife Lady Jane Franklin urged the Admiralty to send a search party, but the British government delayed that mission for another year. When the Admiralty finally launched its search, it also offered a £20,000 reward – a huge sum in those days. This attracted so many search ships, on 32 (or 39) separate missions, that eventually more vessels and men were lost looking for the expedition than had set out under Franklin. *D.Telegraph, 10+13 Sept; D.Mail, 10+11 Sept; Int. New York Times, 11 Sept 2014.*

- A painting hanging at Royal Holloway, University of London, has been haunting exam students for decades. Edwin Landseer's grisly depiction of two polar bears devouring a ship's remains, as well as those of the humans onboard, was inspired by the disappearance of the Franklin expedition. Since the first exams were taken there in the 1920s, the painting has been associated with failure. The story goes that if you sit directly in front of it in an exam, you will fail – unless it is covered up. The macabre spectacle is probably enough to distract even the most conscientious student, but bad luck rumours started almost immediately. There's an obvious connection to failure, said the college's curator, Dr Laura MacCulloch: "I'm going to fail my exam just like they failed to find the Northwest Passage, one might conclude – and then I'll get eaten by a polar bear".

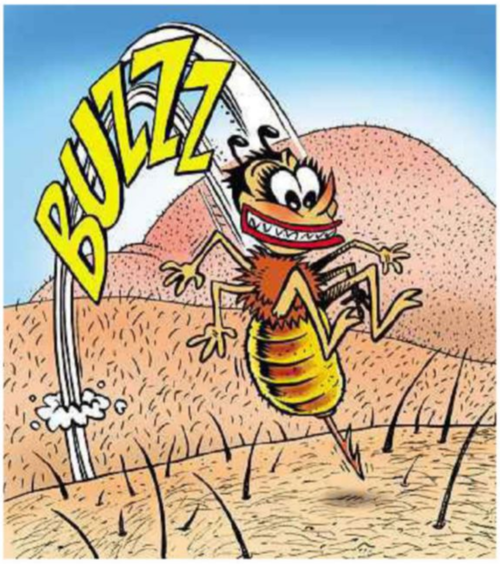
In the 1970s, a student refused point blank to be seated near the painting. "The poor registrar, who just wanted to get this exam underway, ran off and tried to find the biggest thing that she could to cover the picture," said Dr MacCulloch. It turned out to be a massive union flag. Ever since, the same flag has adorned the painting every year during exams. In the last four decades, the urban legend has become more disturbing. Recent graduate Michaela Jones was told that a student during an exam had stared directly into one of the polar bears' eyes, after which she had gone 'mad' and killed herself after scrawling the words "The polar bears made me do it" on her exam paper. Or *his* paper. "I've heard it was a girl, I've heard it was a boy, I've heard about three [different] ways that they killed themselves," said Dr MacCulloch. "Students are quite superstitious," said Ms Jones. "If you speak to anyone at the uni there is a consensus that [the story] is true." Although she acknowledges it probably never happened, she definitely wouldn't want to sit an exam without the comfort of the covering flag. *BBC News (Magazine Monitor), 13 Sept 2014.*



Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

181. BEE STINGS



HUNT EMERSON

The myth

Unlike wasps, bees can only sting once – and then they die.

The "truth"

It's the loose use of the word "bees" that makes this common belief a myth. Bumblebees, like wasps and solitary bees, can use their stings repeatedly. It's only *honeybees* that die after stinging. The difference lies in the shape of their weapons; wasps and bumbles have smooth stingers, which, having entered the target's skin, can be removed intact. But honeybees have barbed stingers. As the bee attempts to leave the target, its body splits apart because the stinger is anchored within the victim's skin. The venom sac remains attached to the sting, so venom continues to flow into the victim. The advantage of this system is that it produces a considerably more toxic and painful sting. The disadvantage, obviously, is the immediate death of the stinger. But evolution isn't much bothered by that, because the sting belonged to a worker honeybee, which wasn't going to reproduce anyway. Worker honeybees only pass on their genes collectively, so to speak, via their queens. The more effective their sting, the better it will protect the colony, and thus the greater chance that the queen will survive to reproduce – and that advantage outweighs the loss of individual workers. Although solitary bees and bumblebees *can* sting repeatedly, in practice they rarely sting at all. Presumably they have evolved less fearsome weapons of protection, because they have less to protect. Unlike honeybees, they don't have nests full of honey to guard against raiders. Wasps use their stings for hunting, and therefore need them to be repeatable.

Sources

Buzzword, July 2014; www.ibra.org.uk/categories/faq#FAQ_8; www.bumblebee.org/faq.htm

Disclaimer

Disagree? Then please dip your stingers in ink, and buzz over to the letters page.

Mythchaser

A reader asks whether it's true that hitchhikers in parts of Europe who stick their thumbs out for a lift are unwittingly causing great offence to passing drivers by accusing them of being cuckolds.

DON'T MISS MYTHCONCEPTIONS THE BOOK
OUT NOW ONLINE AND IN ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS

FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

Further fainting fits, more Slender Man-inspired mayhem and the guru in a freezer

WAKEY WAKEY! [FT314:22]

On 29 January this year, Shri Ashutosh Maharaj, whose Divya Jyoti Jagriti Sansthaan (Divine Light Awakening Mission) claims more than 30 million followers, died of a heart attack in his 70s in the northern Indian town of Nurmahal in the Jalandhar district of the Punjab. Refusing to accept his passing, his devotees said he was in a state of *samadhi* and placed his body in a commercial freezer. Police confirmed his death, but the Punjab High Court later dismissed the police report and local government officials decided that the dispute was a spiritual matter. The sect was started in 1983 to promote "self-awakening to global peace" and to create a world "wherein every individual becomes an embodiment of truth, fraternity and justice through the eternal science of self-realisation". It owns properties in India, the US, South America, Australia, the Middle East and Europe, including its British headquarters in Hayes, west London.

In May, with followers still refusing to hand over the guru's body to his family for cremation, an Indian court was asked to decide whether he was dead or in a state of profound meditation. Dilip Jha, the guru's 40-year-old son, believes his father's followers are keeping hold of his body in order to maintain control of his finances – the sect's property estate is worth an estimated £100 million – and to keep the contributions rolling in. Every day, doctors at the sect's 100-acre (40ha) Jalandhar estate enter the heavily guarded freezer to check for signs of the guru's awakening. "He is not dead," said a sect spokesman, "he is a living saint and he will be back to speak of his journey at the moment of his choosing." Fortean Towers has received no news that the body has been released to the family. *Independent, D.Telegraph, 29 May; Sunday Age (Melbourne), 15 June 2014.*

SLENDER MAN [FT317:30]

On 4 September, Lily Marie Hartwell, 14, was arrested after setting her family's house on fire in what authorities suspect is the latest case of Slender Man-inspired violence. She had soaked a towel and bed sheet in bleach and rum and set them on fire in the garage of her family's house in Port Richey, Florida, at about 1.45am. As flames spread, she fled to a nearby park and slept in a lavatory block. Her mother and nine-year-old brother escaped the fire unharmed, but the house was destroyed.

Police found Hartwell shortly afterwards at the park, where she told a detective she was reading an e-book called *Soul Eater*, which made her upset about past bullying and her mother punishing her before bed. "There's a part in this book where two characters get into a fight with each other," said Sheriff Chris Nocco. "All of a sudden, that clicked something in her mind and she decided she was going to kill her family." She admitted setting the fire after a family argument. She also told police she had been reading about Slender Man, the online paranormal character who allegedly motivated two 12-year-old Wisconsin girls to stab their friend 19 times in May. "She had visited the website [creepypasta.com] that contains a lot of the Slender Man information and stories," said a police spokesman. "It would be safe to say there is a connection to that."

After the fire and while police were searching for the suspect, Hartwell texted her mother to apologise, saying, "Mom I'm so sorry I don't know why I did it," and "Did any of u get hurt". She had a bag containing bottled water, cookies, knives, lighters and torches. Police also found a journal, marked "Keep Out", in which she wrote about "killing" and said "If this keeps up there will be no safety in this house." She remained in police custody and was charged with arson and attempted murder. *Tampa Bay (FL) Times 4 Sept; NY Daily News, 5 Sept; Good Morning America, 6 Sept 2014.*

DROPPING LIKE NINEPINS [FT318:5]

First their hands and feet feel cold. Then they go pale and cannot move. More than 300 girls in El Carmen de Bolivar – a town of 67,000 near the port of Cartagena on Colombia's Caribbean coast – have came down with symptoms ranging from fainting to headaches. Some suspected mass hysteria, but parents were worried because all the girls, ranging in age from nine to 16, had been injected in recent months with Gardasil, a popular vaccine against the sexually transmitted human papillomavirus, or HPV, which can trigger cervical cancer.

"They vaccinated me in May and I started fainting in August," recalled Eva Mercado, 15. "My legs became heavy and I couldn't feel my hands anymore. When I woke up, I was in the hospital." She passed out seven times in a month. "They brought me to the hospital 16 times last month," said Beatriz Martinez. For the 15-year-old, it all started with headaches and backaches. Then her legs and hands lost feeling, obliging her mother to help her take baths. The city's modest Nuestra Señora del Carmen hospital was overwhelmed by a surge of unconscious teenage girls being wheeled through its doors. Panicked fathers brought their daughters to the facility aboard their motorcycles, using the town's dirt roads. Doctors searched in vain for possible cases of hypoglycemia or drug abuse. According to hospital official Augusto Agamez, about 370 minors had checked into the facility. There was only one boy among them.

The girls affected by the mysterious malaise no longer go outside. Some don't even leave their homes. "My daughter is not the same," said street vendor Jhon Jairo Mercaco, adding that, until now, his daughter had not been hospitalised since birth. On 27 August, residents marched peacefully to demand a thorough investigation. Francisco Vega, the town's mayor and a trained physician, said that the symptoms first appeared at the end of May and had been steadily increasing ever since. Over the weekend of 23/24 August, 120 girls were rushed to hospitals, overwhelming the town's limited medical facilities. All the girls were sent home within a day or two.

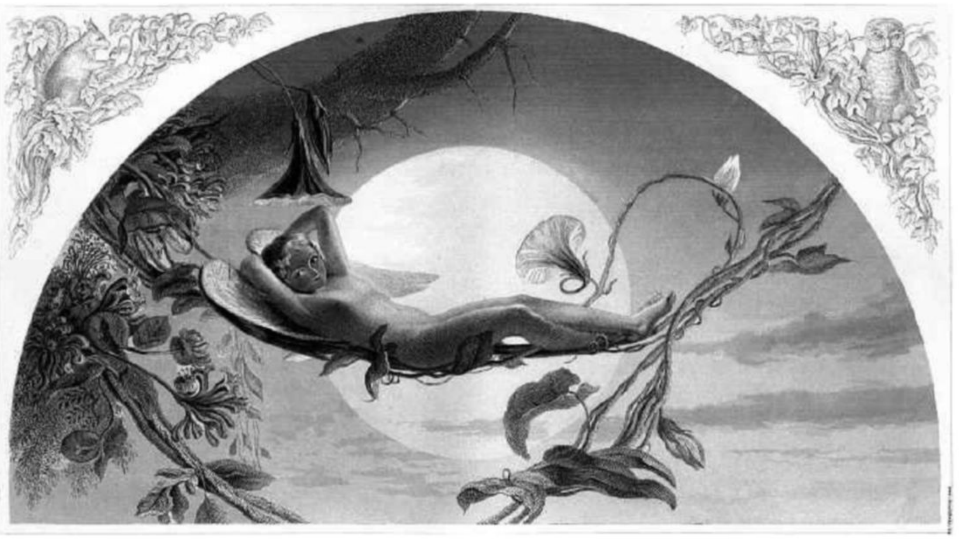
Echoing the assurances of national health and toxicology experts who had travelled to the town to collect blood samples and investigate possible environmental hazards, the mayor said there was no evidence the vaccine was to blame. It had undergone extensive testing and regulation globally, and had been given to 2.9 million women in Colombia. Health Minister Alejandro Gaviria pointed out that cervical cancer kills more than 3,000 women every year in Colombia. US drug giant Merck, which makes the Gardasil vaccine, said it was "confident in the safety profile" of its product. "We continue to monitor adverse events reporting and are following this situation closely," it said in a statement.

Insisting the HPV vaccination campaign was safe, President Juan Manuel Santos suggested the epidemic was no more than a "phenomenon of collective suggestion", a comment met with tremendous anger in El Carmen de Bolivar. *[AP] 27 Aug; [AFP] 18 Sept 2014.*

- On 15 August, six students in a school in Hazipur, near the town of Patuakhali in Bangladesh, fell unconscious within a short time and were taken to a local clinic. Doctors there said it was a case of "mass hysteria" manifested in anxiety and hyperventilation, but the five girls and a boy said they had been visited by the demon Ramayan, which wanted the 25-year-old hog plum tree next to the school building to be chopped down and each of the six to sacrifice a goat and distribute the meat among the locals to appease it.

Laboni Baiddhya was the only Hindu among the "possessed" and the first to pass out. She and the others, all of whom are classmates except for two who are two years junior to her and studying in class six, were treated for six days at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital. None of them returned to school immediately. Laboni's father Hebol Baiddhya said she had been "acting weird", scolding and sometimes becoming aggressive when approached. On 15 September Laboni lost consciousness again, though only for a short period. The situation was worse for Rojina, one of the two younger ones. Lying in bed most of the time, she had a blank look in her eyes, cried out in sudden fits and attacked people at random.

When many other students stopped coming to classes, the villagers of Hazipur summoned Babul Huzur, a 'spiritual healer' to use charms and chant incantations to exorcise the evil spirit and set things right. "We are trying our best to overcome the situation," said the high school's headmaster Shah Jalal Munshi, apparently not convinced that it was the work of an evil spirit. *The Daily Star (Dhaka), 23 Sept 2014.*



FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

SIMON YOUNG FILES A NEW REPORT FROM THE INTERFACE OF STRANGE PHENOMENA AND FOLK BELIEF

THE FAIRY TOUCH

There are many fascinating folklore hints in *The Secret Commonwealth*, the 17th-century study of Scottish elves, written by one Robert Kirk, a member of the Scottish clergy. But perhaps the most bizarre is the author's advice to those who lack second sight, but who want, nevertheless, to glimpse fairies. The curious party is told by Kirk "to put his foot on the Seer's foot, and the Seer's hand is put in the Inquirer's head, who is to look over the wizard's right shoulder". Kirk claims that, by this strange version of vertical Twister, the inquirer will immediately see "a multitude of Wights" (aka fairies).

Now is it possible that folklore here is transmitting fortean knowledge? Can mere physical touch with a 'seer' draw back the veil between this world and the seer's projections/the realm of faerie?

There are certainly mutterings about something similar among interested parties: theosophists, for example, talk of a seer reinforcing the natural clairvoyance of those with weaker gifts by their very proximity; spiritualists have long held hands at the séance table; and parapsychologists have made the distinction between touching and non-touching subjects in alleged telepathic acts. As to Kirk's directions, these have presumably been little followed in the last century. But there are several examples on record, where physical contact has apparently been responsible for visions of fairies.

Katharine Briggs recounts a fairy sighting on the Isle of Skye at the end of the 19th century, where an old woman told three children (all of whom remembered the experience in their old age) that the four should hold hands, and she then showed them a group of fairies: Briggs wondered, reasonably enough, whether the hand-clutching had caused or facilitated the vision.

AN OLD WOMAN TOLD THREE CHILDREN THAT THE FOUR SHOULD HLD HANDS, AND SHE THEN SHOWED THEM A GROUP OF FAIRIES

There is a tale from Shetland of a wife who can see the trowies (trolls) dancing, but whose husband cannot until they hold hands. If this risks being too distant from actual experience – we may be dealing with a legend rather than a memory – then, what about the following letter from 1950s Poland?

The letter-writer and a friend were confronted by the fey while in a boat. The letter writer could see nothing but his friend, who could, "grasped my hand firmly, and at once I saw two female figures floating above the ground and approaching us".

I have not the slightest idea why touch should help people to see or to believe that they see fairies. But I am equally confused as to why physical contact does not seem to help with ghosts, madonnas, demons, angels, UFOs or other members of the visionary menagerie; these, after all, so often share so much with fairies. Now, again, why should this be? Or are there cases that I am not familiar with that show that touch does help in parallel circumstances?

the UFO files

FORTEAN TIMES presents our monthly section featuring regular sighting reports, reviews of classic cases, entries on major ufological topics and hands-on advice for UFO investigators. **The UFO Files** will benefit from your input, so don't hesitate to submit your suggestions and questions.

To contact **The UFO Files**, email: **nufon@btinternet.com**

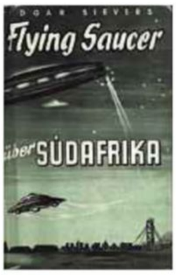
FLYINGSAUCERY

ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE PRESENT THEIR REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY

AN AMERICAN CRAZE?

People have always seen puzzling phenomena in the sky but the modern UFO era was born in the USA with Kenneth Arnold's sighting and the Roswell incident in 1947. Social historians are now taking a serious interest in how news about flying saucers became a global phenomenon, along with the responses it garnered and the impact it had on contemporary thoughts and values. In a new academic paper historian Greg Eghigian of Penn State University examines how the mainstream press and public figures in post-war West and East Germany reported on and discussed the first UFO flaps. Eghigian's examination of newspaper coverage on both sides of the Iron Curtain throws up some interesting reactions to what one German journalist described as America's "flying saucer disease". It was no surprise given the Third Reich's use of V-weapons in WWII that early UFO accounts described saucers as having rocket-like features. As the Cold War became decidedly chilly, saucers "not only elicited fear, but they also promoted distrust, especially towards authorities" as a result of inconsistent and contradictory government statements on the subject. Eghigian also found Germans reacted to the myth and mystery of UFOs by turning to occult and esoteric ideas such as Theosophy. One of the first-generation ufologists he mentions is Edgar Sievers, whose *Flying Saucers over South Africa*, published in 1955, was the first book-length treatment of the subject in the German language. The paper also examines opinions expressed by figures such as Wernher von Braun and Carl Jung that were hugely influential in shaping public opinion about what Eghigian calls "a transatlantic cold war rumour of unusual resilience".

Greg Eghigian, "'A transatlantic buzz': flying saucers, extraterrestrials and America in post-war Germany", *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 12(3), 2014, 282-303.

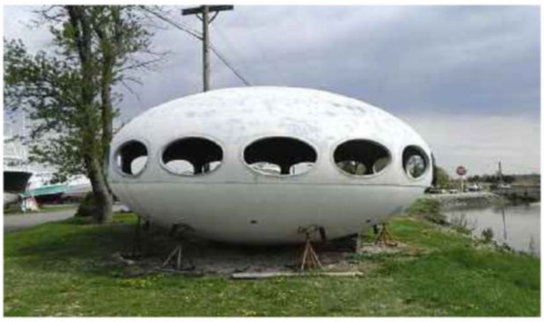


A BRITISH CRAZE?

There are almost two million sites on the Internet dealing in some way with 'sky lanterns', those brightly internally illuminated balloons popular with wedding parties and people just having fun. Stories of them being misperceived as 'UFOs' have appeared in many media sources since 2003, when they first appeared at the Glastonbury Festival. In the summers of 2008 and 2009 flotillas of lanterns caused a series of 'sightings', including those made by the crew of the South Wales Police helicopter and by soldiers at a barracks in Shropshire (**FT239:30**; **304:29**). The airborne police encounter with a lantern was described recently by former MoD UFO desk jockey Nick Pope as one of the stories "that most impressed me". The fun has been tempered by complaints about lanterns setting fire to land or property, but for some reason the British public have a particular fascination for these lanterns. Now, following last year's six million pound blaze at a recycling plant in the West Midlands, the Trading Standards Institute (TSI) has issued guidelines that aim to prevent disasters of this kind ever happening again. The design guidelines include making the balloons fire retardant, limiting their size and ensuring each one is sold with safety instructions and warnings. If manufacturers comply with these guidelines it would ensure that the lanterns only return to the ground after the heat source is extinguished, thus preventing serious fires. The regulations also require air traffic control at any airport within 10 miles to be notified before lanterns are launched, as well as coastguards if the location is near the sea.

Flying Saucery loves the extra dimension sky lanterns have brought to the UFO phenomenon and while we are completely against the outright ban on their sale and use we welcome any initiatives which make their use safer. Keep watching the skies!

www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/aug/20/sky-lanterns-paper-chinese-new-guidance-warnings; www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-28900374.



ROUND AND ROUND?

Art sometimes imitates life. Architecture can apparently imitate UFOs. A 'Futuro' home (left), which looks like a giant flying saucer with windows around its middle, as seen by witnesses the world over, was auctioned on eBay in May for the relatively small sum of $30,000. Avid ufological historians will recall that a 'Futuro' home was on display in Todmorden for several months before PC Alan Godfrey had his historic sighting and 'abduction' of 28 November 1980. Take a look at the URL below and then re-read our article in **FT270:46-49**). Makes a sort of sense, doesn't it?

www.ebay.com/itm/221432005189

AND THE FOOTAGE CONTINUES

Each passing month brings another round of UFO footage and stills to examine. Some, perhaps most, can be dismissed easily as being hoaxes or misperceptions. A few are more intriguing, such as the film shot by a holiday maker returning from Greece on 16 September who saw an array of coloured lights in the night sky between 20-30 minutes before he landed at Cardiff airport. The witness said: "We were flying from Greece to Cardiff. It was on Tuesday night and happened about 20 to 40 minutes before we arrived at 10pm… The lights could have been from a few miles away – it was pitch black outside, so it's hard to say what it was. It was quite weird. It was very bright – it was the brightest thing I've ever seen. I just realised how bright it was and said to my girlfriend 'Look at that!' Reflected lights from another plane, or perhaps from a boat, considering the flight path would have taken them over water. Whatever it is, it's yet another unusual, apparently aerial, phenomenon worthy of our time and your attention. As the witness to this particular event commented: "UFO is a really broad term. That's what it is, you know: an unidentified flying object".

www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/ufo-mystery-plane-passenger-films-4280874

UFO CASEBOOK

JENNY RANDLES EXPLORES ACCOUNTS OF VISIONARY EXPERIENCES LINKING ESP TO UFOs

ALIEN ESP

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

A century ago, when he was two years old, famous naturalist Sir Peter Scott approached his mother's knee murmuring something that she noted in her diary: "*Amundsen and daddy both got to the pole... but daddy has stopped work now*".

The toddler's father was famed explorer Robert Falcon Scott leading a team to conquer the South Pole in a race against Roald Amundsen. These brave men spent weeks marching across remote ice and glaciers, far from other humans. It was about as out of touch with the world as you could be in 1912.

So how did Peter know what his father was doing?

Months later the British party was found dead. They had reached the pole – as Peter said – although Amundsen got there first. Scott's team had then struggled back to be defeated mid-way by harsh weather as their supplies ran out. Accepting doom, Scott wrote a note to his young son from his tent then 'stopped work' as his life ebbed away.

Perhaps it was just coincidence or daydream. Or perhaps it might suggest that there is a way to communicate mind-to-mind. Many such experiences of what some call ESP, or telepathy, are often simply 'a sense of knowing' like this one. But science has failed to establish solid proof that it is a real phenomenon despite much research.

One problem can be that experiments often transmit dull things from a sender to a receiver. This becomes a statistical challenge to see whether their 'guesses' are higher than chance decrees, and it tends to bypass the key factor that Scott's story illustrates: an emotional bond.

However, on 19 August this year new experiments were published on science website plosone.org. The snappily titled "Conscious brain-to-brain communication in humans using non-invasive technology" sets out results from a team of scientists, including a Harvard medical centre, a robotics project and science labs in Barcelona. Tests during March and April employed four researchers in other labs around the world seeking to transmit a short message across half the planet.

On 28 March, a sender's brain successfully encoded a message into digital data by imagining moving his eyes in specific directions. At the receiving end, in a room with sensory input blocked, another scientist then 'decoded' the incoming data inside his cortex to recreate the movements from thousands of miles away. His computer then translated this message. A series of tests achieved an accuracy level between 90 and 95 per cent.

This was never designed as proof of telepathy but as an extension of existing methods that allow the severely disabled some control of computers using brain waves: instead of brain-to-computer, a 'brain-to-brain' communication path was established. One aim of his work is to perhaps communicate with patients in deep coma without the ability to speak. But, this success might also reveal that information can be transferred into and out of our brains across thousands of miles, thus matching cases like Peter Scott's.

Spontaneous cases 'in the wild' are full of situations where some kind of emotional peril exists, or there is a pressing reason why 'A' might want to get a message to 'B' in ways not possible via the usual senses. Often that bond involves messages passed from parent to child or between two loved ones.

For instance on 7 November 1984, round the world yachtsman Chay Blyth (pictured above) and his partner Eric Blunn were sailing round Cape Horn when their trimaran was overturned by a huge wave. They were tossed into the water, clinging onto the hull with only thoughts of home keeping them going. Then, a day later, a passing ship spotted the men and hauled them to safety.

Far away, in Liskeard, Cornwall, Chay's wife Maureen was overcome by a "strange, powerful feeling" just as her husband fought for life. She said that she did not know exactly what was happening to him but "I knew *something* had happened to Chay".

Comedian Michael Bentine described several personal 'knowing' experiences to me and had a neat description for what seemed to be going on with Chay Blyth and his wife: "He sent out a psychic distress signal and she picked it up".

So what has all this got to do with UFOs, you're no doubt wondering. Well, bear in mind that alien contact cases are full of this 'sense of knowing' and emotional bonding.

In March 1942, a heavily pregnant 27-year-old had a UFO encounter on Cheltenham High Street. She described to me at length the UFO that crossed the sky discharging light 'quills' alongside major alterations to her state of consciousness. All people in the street 'vanished', her vision focused only on the extraordinary sight and then she walked home in a daze – losing recall of the walk altogether.

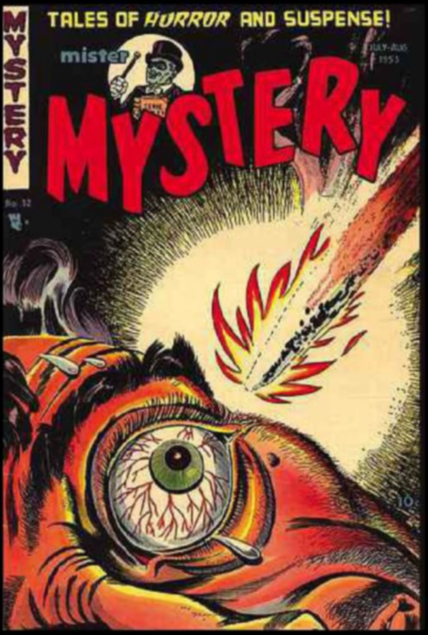
In one respect this is just like a thousand other sightings, but the witness was extraordinarily able to share her emotions with me, which proved crucial. She referred to being in a "particularly sensitive state" as she walked through town. Indeed, at one point, as she passed a stranger, she found herself "in tune" with what "seemed like a telepathic link". Whilst still in this state she just had an "impulse" to look in a particular direction and "knew instinctively" that she was looking at something "not from this Earth".

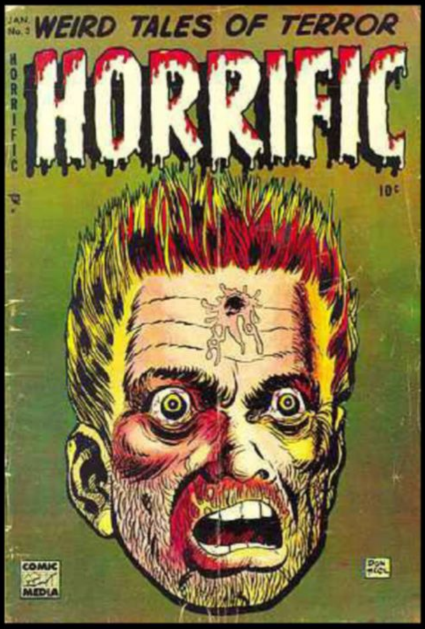
Her entire account emphasised to me how her sighting was visionary: why, otherwise, didn't half of Cheltenham see this UFO? Before our long discussion about her sighting she had told only a few people, making a brief report to a national UFO group. They did not ask any questions about states of mind, or subsequent experiences. In fact, these later events saw her receive "impressions dictation" directly into her mind, which she translated as images and symbols; some of these matched up with events that occurred around the world.

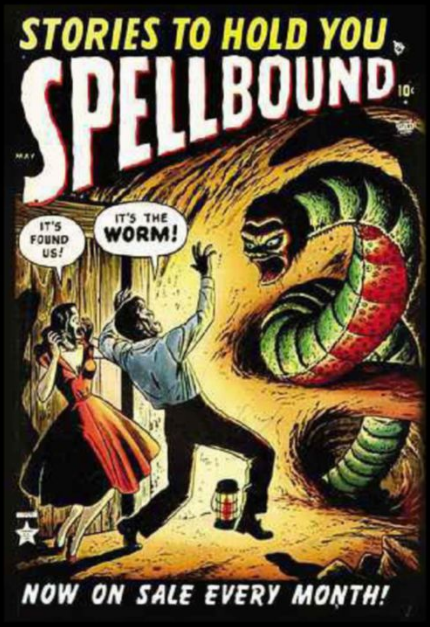
The UFO group merely logged her sighting as an alien 'mother ship' and left it at that: which in my view misses the whole point of this case, and probably many others like it that offer similar clues. For instance, there was a young man from Zimbabwe who told me of his sightings of UFOs and small beings both in Africa and London. He described his feelings during the encounters of being "detached" and almost viewing the episode from "beyond my mind". During the contact with these beings (which he called ghosts, smurfs – anything to avoid saying they were alien) he heard "noises in my mind" that sounded like words that he had to struggle to decode. But he was unconvinced about them coming from space because when he "unravelled" the words put "into my head" the results was "just too normal... I don't think anyone from another planet could master the English language" in the way these messages did.

Hopefully, you can spot a pattern here and see why I find the new 'telepathy' experiments intriguing. Close encounter witnesses report detached states, having to decode things 'beamed' straight into their brains, forming English words from raw data and translating them as images to match events that occur somewhere far away. UFO witnesses describe messages impressed directly onto their cortex whilst blocking out all vision of the rest of the world; they then often 'see' things that others do not after undergoing what resembles 'telepathic' rapport. The similarities seem clear. Close encounters often look like real world accounts that mimic these new lab experiments where computers have linked brains across the globe. If so, one big question is: *what* 'sends' the data 'beamed' into the cortex of UFO witnesses?

ATTACK OF T
MUSHROO







ROBERT GUFFEY looks back at the moral panic sparked by American horror comics in the 1940s and 1950s and asks whether what was really at work was political propaganda and the simple art of distraction…

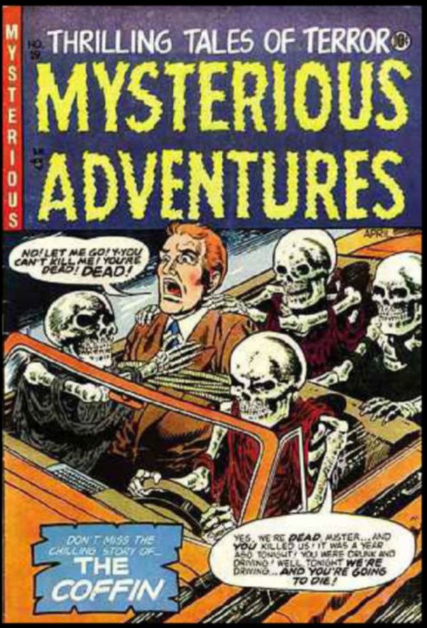
THE HORROR! THE HORROR!

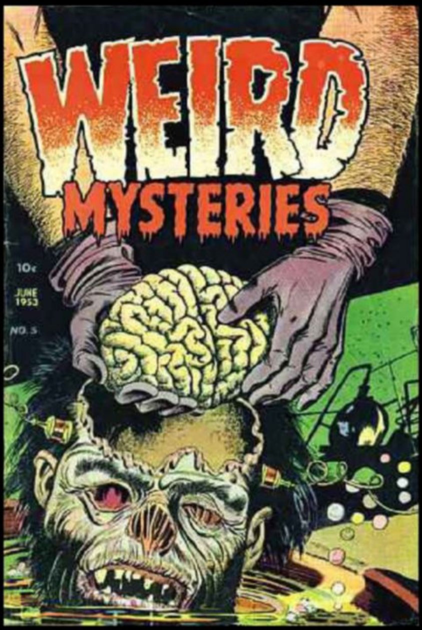
During the past few years, a spate of archival volumes have appeared reprinting obscure comic book horror stories published originally in the 1940s and 1950s. On Hallowe'en 2010, Abrams ComicArts published an excellent overview of the rise and fall of 1950s horror comics: *The Horror! The Horror! Comic Books the Government Didn't Want You To Read!* by Jim Trombetta. This study is far superior to most books that attempt to uncover the hidden corners of American pop culture, for Trombetta's commentary is not merely informative but filled with unique and surprising insights that cast these forgotten gems of "sequential art" in a new and disturbing light – disturbing because Trombetta reveals how the contents of these little postmodern Grimm's fairy tales were far less horrific than the real life nightmares from which they emerged.

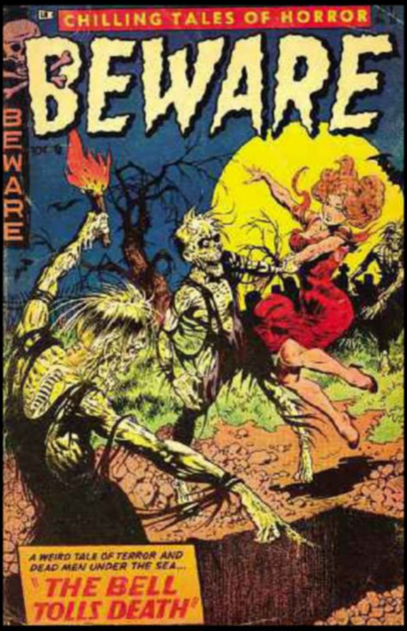
One of the recurrent themes of 1950s horror comics is the thin line between illusion and reality. A perfect example is Basil Wolverton's effectively creepy four-page tale "Nightmare World," first published in the Sept 1952 issue of *Weird Tales of the Future*, in which an obsessed scientist named Herman Lasher attempts "to summon the powers of the subconscious mind by the use of chemicals" that propel him deep into the "hidden recesses" of his own dream world. Perhaps inevitably, upon awakening from his experiment, Lasher discovers that the barrier between the noumenal and phenomenal worlds is easily penetrated… with disastrous results for the dreamer; in the last panel of the story, it is revealed that the scientist has taken the form of his own worst nightmare. [1]

This tale can be seen as a metaphor for the entire decade of the 1950s. The picture-perfect surface of McCarthy's USA hid a menace far more nightmarish than the Communist saboteurs the honourable Senator from Wisconsin so desperately wished the American populace to fear. As so often occurs in these ostensibly crude terror tales, the real horror often emerges from within human beings themselves rather than from some outside, supernatural source. In a chapter entitled "The Tale of the Head", for example, Trombetta masterfully compares the "shrunken head" motif in 1950s horror comics with the flesh-flaying, real life pastimes of notorious Nazi Karl Otto Koch, commandant of Buchenwald.

HE POISONOUS
M GROWTH!


THRILLING TALES OF TERROR
MYSTERIOUS
MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURES
APRIL
NO! LET ME GO! Y-YOU CAN'T KILL ME! YOU'RE DEAD! DEAD!
DON'T MISS THE CHILLING STORY OF... THE COFFIN
YES, WE'RE DEAD, MISTER... AND YOU KILLED US! IT WAS A YEAR AGO TONIGHT! YOU WERE DRUNK AND DRIVING! WELL, TONIGHT WE'RE DRIVING... AND YOU'RE GOING TO DIE!


WEIRD MYSTERIES
10¢
JUNE 1953
NO. 5


CHILLING TALES OF HORROR
BEWARE
BEWARE
A WEIRD TALE OF TERROR AND DEAD MEN UNDER THE SEA...
"THE BELL TOLLS DEATH"

In a chapter entitled "Tom's Leg," Tombetta's analysis of a seldom seen horror comic book cover by Hy Fleishman from August 1953 (*Dark Mysteries* #13) is far more entertaining and mind-bending than the original story that spawned it. Some more literal-minded readers might grit their teeth through Trombetta's Freudian analysis of these simple stories, but the fact is that most of the author's commentaries come off as quite rational. It's hard to imagine, at this late date, how any study of the horror genre could approach the subject matter without acknowledging Freud at some point.

Many horror fans believe that analysing the genre too deeply will somehow strip away the primal magic and destroy the mystique of their favourite stories forever. However, to paraphrase bestselling horror novelist Clive Barker: "Any genre that has to be wilfully blind to its psychological subtext in order to work isn't worth a damn." Apparently Trombetta agrees with Barker.

Perhaps it's no coincidence that the cover of *The Horror! The Horror!* depicts a bloodshot eye staring in fear (and fascination?) at a phallic-looking, salivating, worm-like beast that appears to be on the verge of raping the man's retina with its prehensile tail. Yes, the ugly truth can be blinding sometimes; that moment of unbearable revelation is the crux of almost any great horror story ever published. And that includes *The Horror! The Horror!*

IN THE LAST PANEL, THE SCIENTIST HAS TAKEN THE FORM OF HIS OWN WORST NIGHTMARE...

Though factual, Trombetta's book truly *is* a horror story – a horror story *about* horror stories. In the chapter entitled "The Age of Nuclear Terror," Trombetta writes:

> *Outrageous as they were, horror comics were in no way progressive or, in our term, 'correct'. They were oblique, symbolic, and loaded with subconscious affect… These comics conveyed the unspeakable, and maybe even unthinkable, trauma of a whole society, but in a streetwise, urban-legend way. On one hand, they could be more reactionary, racist, and brutal than the surrounding culture, as if to rub the reader's nose in a deliberate caricature. On the other hand, their radicalism could be startling. They kicked over the biggest triumph in history just to see what might crawl out.* [2]

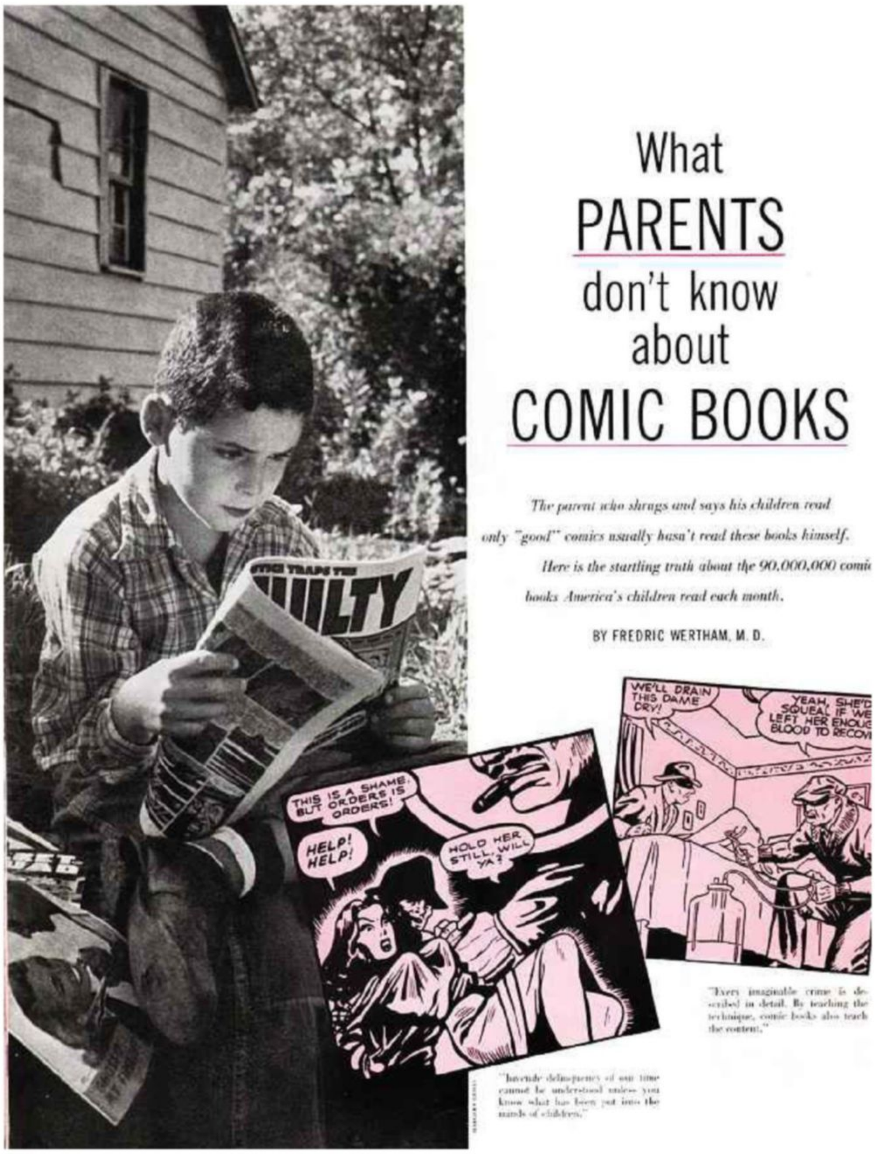
Let's try kicking over the sordid tale lurking around the edges of Trombetta's book and seeing what crawls out. Who knows? Perhaps we'll uncover the subtext *behind* the subtext.

SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS

Let's travel back in time 52 years before the publication of *The Horror! The Horror!* when an invisible art form was consumed by fire all across the United States. Trombetta does not mention that the first spark of this conflagration was lit by a children's writer named Sterling North. Don't be alarmed if you've never heard of North. I finally discovered that he was the author of such lost "masterpieces" as *Abe Lincoln, Log Cabin To White House* and *George Washington, Frontier Colonel*. It's ironic but appropriate that long after the corpse of Mr North has been devoured by worms (phallic, salivating worms with prehensile tails, perhaps?), he is known not for the stories he left to children, but for those he tried to steal from them.

In a 1940 edition of the *Chicago Daily News*, North fired the initial salvo against the comic book medium, calling it a "poisonous mushroom growth" of "graphic insanity" that used a "hypodermic injection of sex and murder" to corrupt America's youth. The effect of these illicit injections of crude, four-colour "pulp paper nightmares is that of a violent stimulant," he claimed. [3] Just showing a single panel to a child would cause him or her to go screeching out the door with knife in hand, ready to murder millions. To save America's youth from this creeping darkness, North demanded that Washington step in and do something. After all, what were those politicians there for if not to save the country's citizens from the inconvenience of personal responsibility?

Of course, the honourable Mr North had only the children's best interests in mind. The fact that 10 million comics were being sold every month in the year the *Chicago Daily News* article saw print, and the fact that this rapidly growing medium was no doubt eating into the sales of Mr North's literary gems had absolutely nothing to do with his vehement attacks. And Hearst didn't begin a propaganda campaign against marijuana to prevent his paper industries from being hurt by alternative resources such as hemp. And the automobile companies didn't buy up all the streetcars and the railway systems in Los Angeles and melt them for slag in order to create a city dependent on fossil fuels. In America people never conspire against anyone else for economic or political gain. That only happens in other countries.



What
PARENTS
don't know
about
COMIC BOOKS

The parent who shrugs and says his children read only "good" comics usually hasn't read these books himself. Here is the startling truth about the 90,000,000 comic books America's children read each month.

BY FREDRIC WERTHAM, M. D.

"Every imaginable crime is described in detail. By teaching the technique, comic books also teach the content."

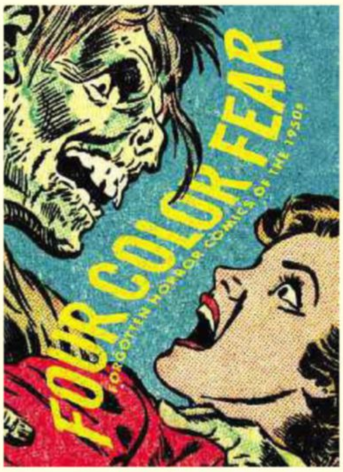
"Juvenile delinquency of our time cannot be understood unless you know what has been put into the minds of children."

WE'LL DRAIN THIS DAME DRY!
YEAH, SHE'D SQUEAL IF WE LEFT HER ENOUG BLOOD TO RECOV
THIS IS A SHAME BUT ORDERS IS ORDERS!
HELP! HELP!
HOLD HER STILL, WILL YA?

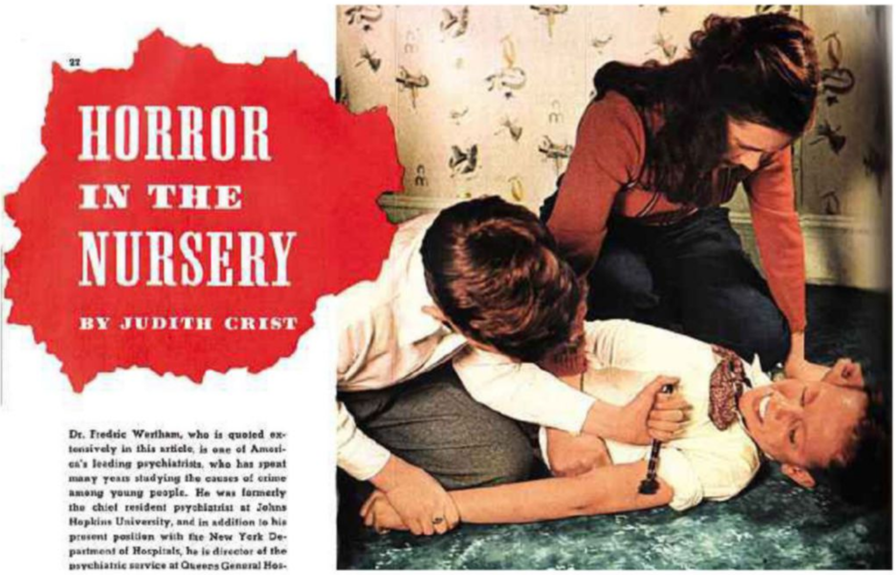
ABOVE: A typical Wertham scare piece appeared in the *Ladies' Home Journal* of November 1953.

FORGOTTEN FEAR

For decades, the story of 1950s horror comics has been limited to the rise and fall of EC Comics, publishers of the classic (and controversial) *Tales from the Crypt*, *The Haunt of Fear*, and *The Vault of Horror*. Editor Greg Sadowski has done a valiant job of broadening this story by putting together the very first high profile collection of 1950s horror comics *not* published by EC. Fans of EC Comics, however, will be pleasantly surprised to discover that the rare comics included in Sadowski's anthology are often more inventive and outrageous than their infinitely better-known counterparts in whose shadow they've languished for so long. Over three dozen stories are included in the pages of *Forgotten Horror Comics of the 1950s*, most of them perpetrated by some of the most lauded names from the Golden Age of comics: Jack Cole, Reed Crandall, George Evans, Frank Frazetta, Everett Raymond Kinstler, Joe Kubert, Bob Powell, Al Williamson, Basil Wolverton, Wallace Wood and dozens more.



The stories range from the gruesome to the surreal to the sublime to the outright absurd. "Corpses… Coast to Coast," produced by anonymous hands working for Jerry Iger Studios, reads like an unlikely collaboration between Ed Wood and Kurt Vonnegut. (If that's hard to imagine, then you'll just have to read the story for yourself.) Bob Powell's "Colorama" is far more visually innovative than almost any EC horror comic produced in the entire 1950s. Jack Cole's six-page tale "Valley of Horror" is filled with enough paranoia and high-octane suspense for a modern 90-minute screenplay. The central menace of Bob Powell's "Wall of Flesh" is unique and disturbing, while his equally terse "Servants of the Tomb" boasts a *deus ex machina* ending so peculiar that it actually manages not to feel like a cheat. George Evans's "The Man Who Outdistanced Death" is as



22

HORROR
IN THE
NURSERY

BY JUDITH CRIST

Dr. Fredric Wertham, who is quoted extensively in this article, is one of America's leading psychiatrists, who has spent many years studying the causes of crime among young people. He was formerly the chief resident psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins University, and in addition to his present position with the New York Department of Hospitals, he is director of the psychiatric service at Queens General Hos-

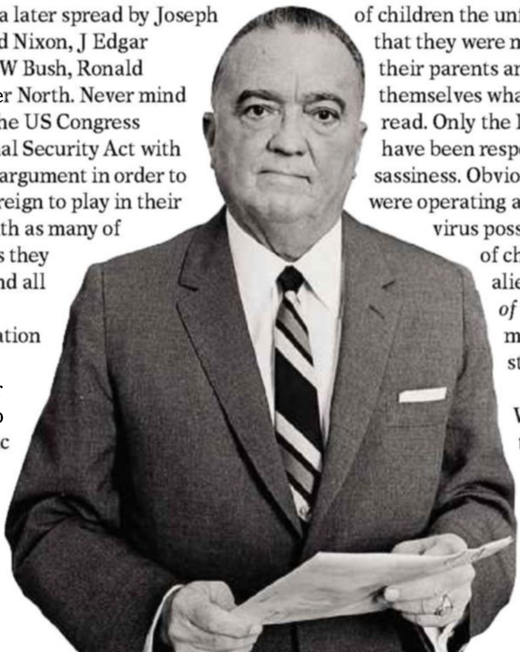
ABOVE: Children act out the violence of the horror comics in an article from *Collier's*, 27 March 1948.

North's frenetic warning against this "cultural slaughter of the innocents" went pretty much unheeded at first, but began to pick up steam when a man named Dr Frederic Wertham entered the picture and attempted to reduce the world of comic books to flakes of grey ash. He very nearly succeeded.

The year was 1948. World War II had ended only three years before and the Cold War had just begun, with American propaganda shifting the nation's hatred away from Germany and Japan and onto a new enemy: the USSR.

Never mind that Russia had nearly been devastated by the Germans during World War II and was in no shape to attack the USA. Never mind the fact that General Reinhard Gehlen, a German intelligence specialist favoured by Adolf Hitler, had been recruited by US intelligence along with hundreds of other top-ranking Nazis under a covert programme known as Operation Paperclip to provide America with secret information on the Russians [4]. Never mind that General Gehlen knew full well that Russia wasn't a threat to anybody and cooked up scary horror stories about "10-foot tall Russians" in order to remain on the rather lucrative payroll of the Office of Strategic Services. [5] Never mind that this gleeful collaboration with the Nazis led to the paranoia later spread by Joseph McCarthy, Richard Nixon, J Edgar Hoover, George HW Bush, Ronald Reagan, and Oliver North. Never mind that late in 1947 the US Congress passed the National Security Act with nary a whisper of argument in order to give the CIA free reign to play in their global sandbox with as many of Gehlen's agents as they wished. Never mind all that.

America as a nation in 1948 decided it had something far more important to worry about: comic books.

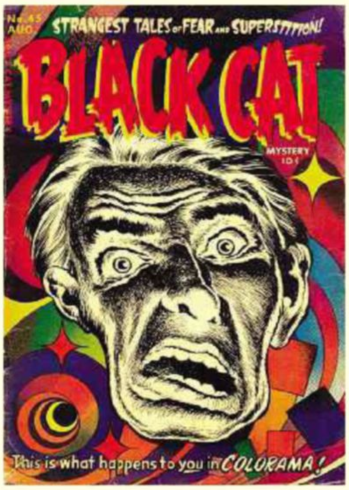


BURNING BOOKS

Clearly, 1948 was a year filled with enough paradox and irony to give Franz Kafka surreal nightmares. This was the year when J Edgar Hoover (below) announced that crime comics were detrimental to the "American way of life". [6] This was the same man who hated blacks while denying that he himself was half-black; the same man who wouldn't allow homosexuals to join the FBI while in his off-hours dressing up in frilly nighties and carrying on a secret sexual relationship with his faithful assistant Clyde Tolson; the same man who reaped millions from the Mafia's coffers while claiming that such an organisation didn't exist except in the minds of total paranoids.

Hoover wasn't alone in his opinion of comic books. On 2 March that year, at the studios of ABC Radio, drama critic John Mason Brown took to the microphone and declared comics to be "the marijuana of the nursery!" [7] while in the 29 May issue of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, Dr Fredric Wertham charged that comic books had caused children all around the country to suddenly go hi-diddle-diddle off the deep end and stab, shoot, bludgeon, blowtorch and otherwise annoy not only their peers, but (even worse) their elders as well. Apparently, these comics had even instilled in a couple of children the unfathomable delusion that they were more intelligent that their parents and could decide for themselves what they wanted to read. Only the Devil himself could have been responsible for such sassiness. Obviously, comic books were operating as a kind of mutant virus possessing the bodies of children like B-movie aliens from *The Village of the Damned*. This menace needed to be stamped out.

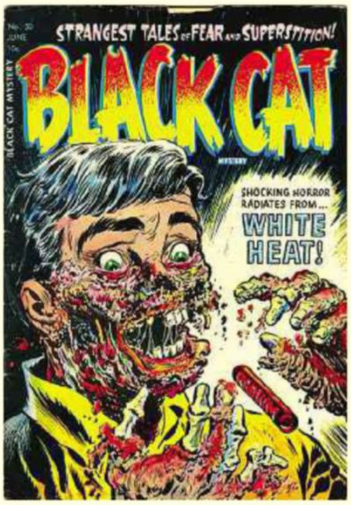
Luckily, Dr Fredric Wertham was around to shoulder the responsibility. On 3 September


No. 45 AUG.
STRANGEST TALES OF FEAR AND SUPERSTITION!
BLACK CAT
MYSTERY 10¢
This is what happens to you in COLORAMA!

good (or better) than any prose horror story published in the last 20 years. And Iger Studios's "Green Horror," a five-page tale about a love triangle between a man, a woman, and a cactus, has to be read to be believed.

Four Color Fear is so impressive that I hope Sadowski chooses to mine the vaults for a follow-up volume of other bizarre, hidden treasures. To learn more about *Four Color Fear*, visit the publisher's website: **www.fantagraphics.com.**

Other archival books intent on rescuing these forbidden tales from the dustbin of official history have since followed, for example: *Blackjacked and Pistol-whipped: A Crime Does Not Pay Primer* edited by Denis Kitchen and John Lind (2011); *Bob Powell's Terror* (2011), *Dick Briefer's Frankenstein* (2010) and *Zombies* (2012), all three edited by Craig Yoe; *Creeping Death From Neptune* by Basil Wolverton (2012) edited by Greg Sadowski; and *Strange Suspense: The Steve Ditko Archives Vol I* (2009), *Unexplored Worlds: The Steve Ditko Archives Vol II* (2010), and *Mysterious Traveler: The Steve Ditko Archives Vol III* (2012) edited by Blake Bell. High quality reprints of the classic EC comics are available from Dark Horse and Fantagraphics.


No. 30 JUNE 10¢
STRANGEST TALES OF FEAR AND SUPERSTITION!
BLACK CAT
BLACK CAT MYSTERY
MYSTERY
SHOCKING HORROR RADIATES FROM...
WHITE HEAT!

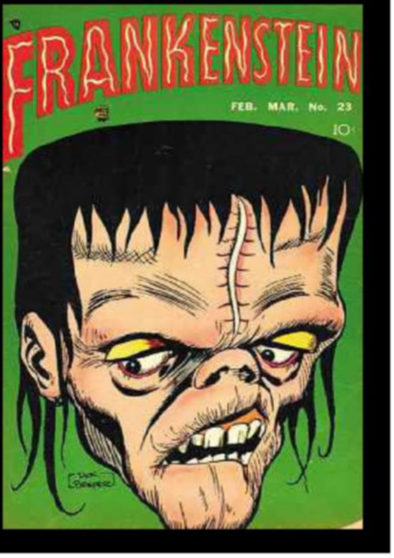
DICK BRIEFER'S FRANKENSTEIN

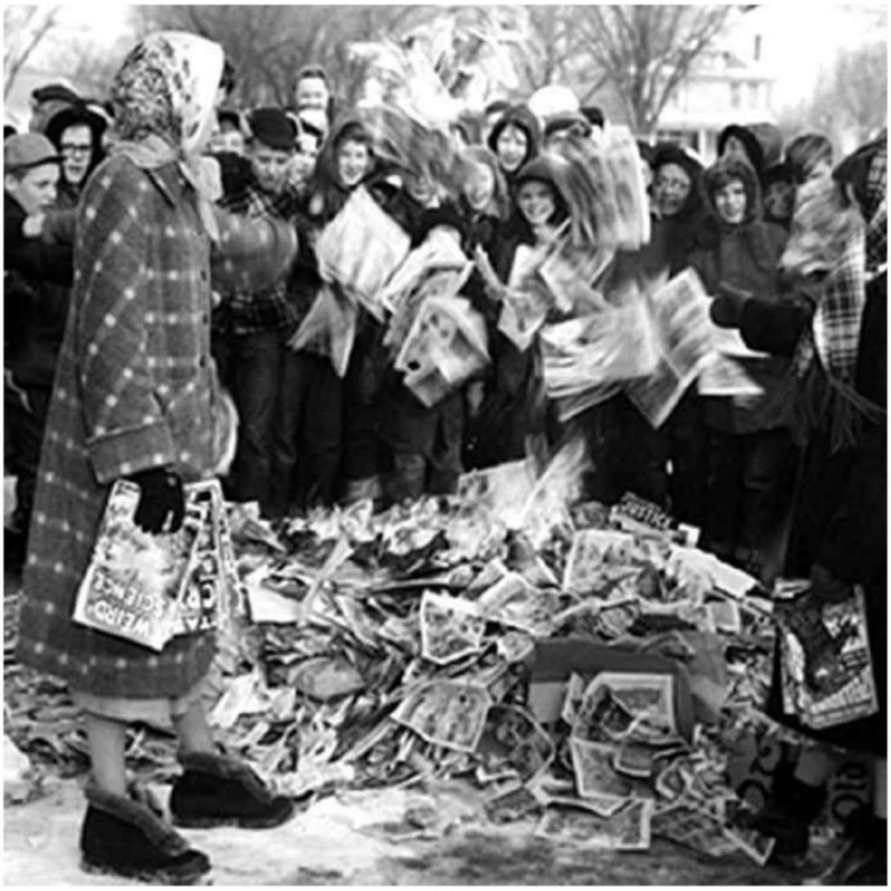
Few comic book fans today are aware of the fact that in the 1940s, during a time when superheroes in brightly coloured tights ruled supreme, one super-powered being stood out from the pack: Frankenstein. Dick Briefer's *Frankenstein* stories, published by Prize Comics, ran from 1940 to 1954, a long and healthy run. But not until 2010 had anyone bothered to reprint these unique stories in a format worthy of them.

For years, in various comic book magazines, I'd read praise for Briefer's *Frankenstein* stories without ever having had the opportunity to actually experience any of them. That's how rare they were. I see now why Briefer is so highly respected by comic connoisseurs. The excellence of this collection is due mainly to the broad range of talent on display within its scant 144 pages: from the unusually dark tone of 1941's "New Adventures of Frankenstein" (what a breath of fresh air this must have been for kids engorged on the sunny exploits of Superman and Captain Marvel), to the pre-*Mad-Magazine* wackiness of 1945's "Frankenstein and the Manamimals," to the stark terror of 1952's "The Tomb of the Living Dead," to the depth of genuine pathos found in 1953's "Friendly Enemies."

In contrast to today's bloated comic book "epics," Briefer's little tales reveal the talents of a genuine ***storyteller,*** more interested in exploring character than just ripping off devoted fans by taking a thin idea and stretching it out for 52 issues. It's easy to see why they inspired talents as varied as John Kricfalusi (creator of *Ren & Stimpy*) and Michael T Gilbert (writer/artist of long-lived comic book adventurer *Mr Monster).*

Dick Briefer's Frankenstein is published by IDW (www.idwpublishing.com).





ABOVE: Mass comic book burnings, organised by churches, schools and community groups, took place across the USA in 1948 and again in 1954-55. Documented burnings include those in New York, Connecticut, Philadelphia, West Virginia, Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin and Oregon.

1948, Wertham delivered a speech before the National Congress of Correction, calling for "a national ordinance to ban the sale of crime comics to children under 15 years of age." This led to an "ordinance limiting the sale of crime comic books" in at least 50 cities.[8] Out of this hysteria grew a scarier phenomenon: angry parents held mass comic book burnings in Chicago, New York, and throughout the mid-West. Some parents even forced their kids to throw their favourite comic books into the fire.

When I was at college in the early 1990s, a colleague of mine once mentioned the above information in a political science paper about censorship in 1950s America. The professor returned the essay with a written comment that such burnings had never occurred. This is rather peculiar, considering the fact that plentiful photos and even film footage of these events does indeed exist and can be seen (to name one example) in Ron Mann's excellent 1989 documentary *Comic Book Confidential.*

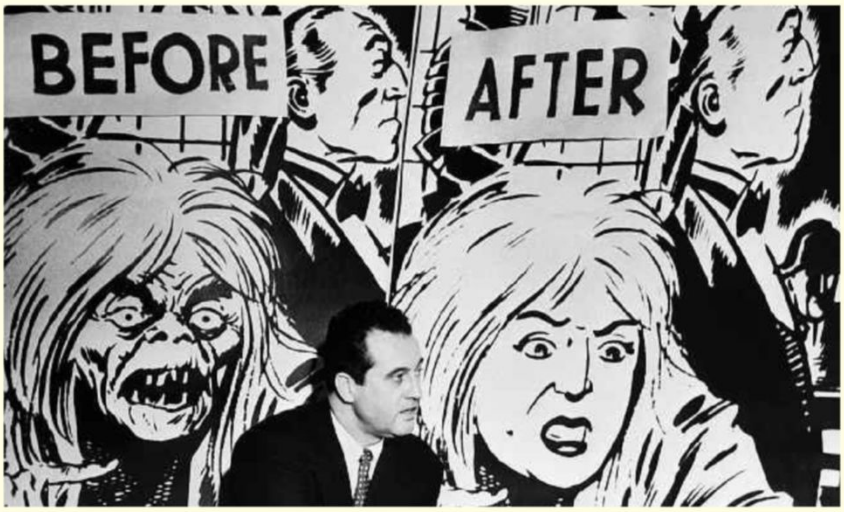
While military officers in the Pentagon were smuggling Nazi war criminals into the United States with the help of Vatican "ratlines",[9] Wertham was doing all he could to import a little bit of the Fatherland to American soil as well – if not literally, then at least in spirit. At around the same time that his learned diagnoses were inspiring book burnings around the country, Wertham was also leading an attack against a brilliant and eccentric psychiatrist named Wilhelm Reich.[10] In 1933, Reich had fled his native Germany in order to avoid the same fate as his book *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, copies of which were burned *en masse* at the behest of the Gestapo.[11] After arriving in the Land of the Free, however, Reich was surprised to find the very same book being attacked by demagogues like Wertham. It's more than possible that Wertham was merely acting as a mouthpiece for the American Psychiatric Association and the pharmaceutical industry, both of whom were slightly upset that Reich claimed to have discovered the means to diagnose and treat cancer with a machine of his own devising called the "Orgone accumulator". Despite the medical community's initial outrage against him, Reich has been vindicated many times over since his premature death in 1957.[12]

THE INQUISITION

In 1954, just two years before the American Food and Drug Administration would burn piles of Reich's books by the decree of a court order, William Gaines volunteered to testify at the Senate Investigation of Comic Books and Juvenile Delinquency. Gaines was the publisher of the infamous EC line of comics including *Tales from the Crypt*, *Weird Science*, *Two-Fisted Tales* and numerous other titles. Many of these comics featured the artwork of singular talents like Bernie Krigstein, Wally Wood, Harvey Kurtzman, Al Williamson, Graham Ingels and others. This small group of artists, who were merely attempting to tell entertaining stories, were now accused of being sick pinko-bastards out to pollute the

DR WERTHAM AND THE CODE

DAVID SUTTON considers how a well-meaning psychiatrist went to war with comics and helped restore conformity to 1950s America.

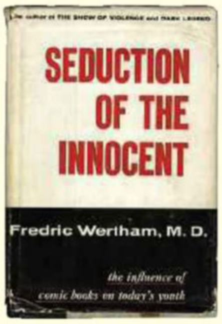


BETTMANN / CORBIS

ABOVE LEFT: Fredric Wertham catches up on some reading. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Charles F Murphy, head of the Comics Magazine Association of America, enforcers of the Code, sits before an illustration showing how the new body would 'clean up' the business: a nightmarish hag is transformed into a blowsy lady with a single wart.

The moral panic over horror and crime comics was predicated on the notion that there was a direct casual link between young people reading such things and a perceived rise in what came to be known in the immediate post-war period as juvenile delinquency. Much of the impetus for the numerous campaigns against comics, the state ordnances banning them from sale, and, ultimately, the introduction of the Comics Code, came from the work of the Munich-born and New York-based psychiatrist Dr Fredric Wertham.

Wertham is mostly remembered as the man who demonised a largely blameless art form and nearly destroyed the comic book industry, but at the same time he was a genuine progressive and undoubtedly sincere in his desire to protect children. It was his earlier work with the disadvantaged and disenfranchised population of New York City – he set up the Lafargue Clinic in Harlem, the first to offer psychiatric help to black Americans – which convinced him that social factors were the main contributor to anti-social and violent behaviour. One of those factors, he came to believe, was comic books, and they became the obsessional focus of a one-man crusade to get them out of the hands of their eager young readers. It was also a crusade that kept him before the public eye in newspapers, magazines, television and as an 'expert witness' in hearings on comic books – all of which helped push sales of his anti-comics tract *Seduction of the Innocent*.


SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT
Fredric Wertham, M. D.
the influence of comic books on today's youth

Pre-code comics were certainly wild, undisciplined and full of irresponsible energy (a bit like children), but Wertham's charges – including the suggestions that Superman was a Fascist and Batman a raving homosexual – were based more on his need to find a simplistic, TV-friendly explanation for social change than any sound methodology or evidential findings.

Just as the McCarthy-led paranoia about Communists infiltrating American society led to the 1947 HUAC hearings, ferreting out supposed Reds in Hollywood, Wertham's avowedly scientific 'research' into the dangerous effects of comic books created another form of 'enemy within' for Middle America to worry about. In this variant, though, the fault lines were generational rather than political: it was the nation's own young people who posed the threat. By the time of the comic books scare, it must have seemed that the emergent world of jitterbugging teenage rebellion was wholly out of control and needed to be put firmly back in its box. The emergence of the 'self regulatory' Comics Code emphasises this very clearly: as well as prohibiting the very stuff of EC Comics – the "walking dead, vampires and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism, and werewolfism" – and banning the words "horror and terror" from comic titles, the Code insisted that the boring adult world was now back in charge: "Policemen, judges, Government officials and respected institutions shall never be presented in such a way as to create disrespect for established authority". The party was well and truly over.

Further reading: David Hajdu's *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic Book Scare and How it Changed America* (New York, Picador, 2008) provides a comprehensive and readable overview of the issue. Sequart Organization's excellent documentary *Diagram for Delinquents* (available from sequart.org) provides much detail on Wertham's role in the various anti-comic hearings and a surprisingly even-handed and even sympathetic view of the industry's greatest bogeyman.

precious bodily fluids of children the world over. It was up to their boss to pull them out of this mess.

Gaines did his best to hold his own during the Senate Inquisition, verbally jousting with the politicos while they appeared to grow more and more hostile toward him. At one point a Senator held up an issue of *Crime SuspenStories* with a severed head on the cover and said: "Here is your May issue. Do you think that's in good taste?"

Gaines replied: "Yes, sir, I do… for the cover of a horror comic."

The Senate didn't consider this to be a reasonable response. As Trombetta writes: "Gaines was an artist, making a hopeless æsthetic argument in a setting of rhetorical moralising".[13]

In September 1954, the publishers were cajoled into forming the Comics Code Authority and appointed New York magistrate Charles F Murphy as official "censor" to institute "the most stringent code in existence for any communications media." Horror and terror comics were banned and to receive the Comics Code Seal of Approval no comic book could "explicitly present the unique details and methods of a crime."[14]

In his 1964 book *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan wrote: "The first comic books appeared in 1935. Not having anything connected or literary about them, and being as difficult to decipher as the *Book of Kells*, they caught on with the young. The elders of the tribe, who had never noticed that the ordinary newspaper was as frantic as a surrealist art exhibition, could hardly be expected to notice that the comic books were as exotic as eighth-century illuminations. So,

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE LEFT: EC's Bill Gaines was right to look worried. **ABOVE LEFT:** Members of the New York State Joint Legislative Committee to Study the Publication of Comics question witnesses in New York, 1951. **BELOW:** Three years later, an exhausted Gaines would face similar questions at the 1954 Senate Subcommittee Hearings into Juvenile Delinquency, at which the cover of *Crime SuspenStories* #22 was produced to great effect.

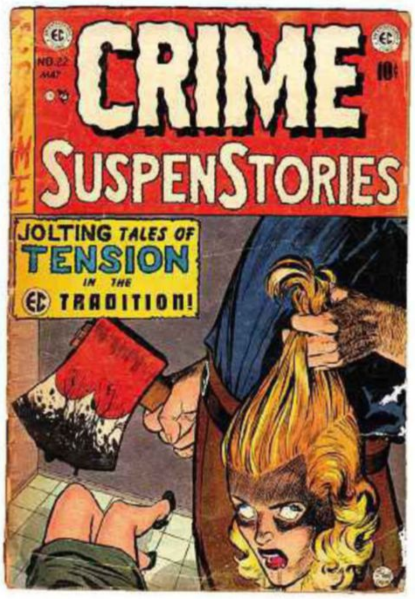
having noticed nothing about the *form*, they could discern nothing of the *contents*, either. The mayhem and violence were all they noted. Therefore, with naïve literary logic, they waited for violence to flood the world. Or, alternatively, they attributed existing crime to the comics. The dimmest-witted convict learned to moan, 'It wuz comics done this to me.'"[15]

THE ART OF DISTRACTION

Along with jazz, comic books are one of the few indigenous American art forms. Due in no small part to the efforts of Blue Meanies like Sterling North, however, this art form has more often than not been banished to the invisible outposts of American culture. What is it about the medium that so frightens the congenitally serious? Is it because comic books, like jazz, have always been a home for society's dregs?[16] According to poet and historian Franklin Rosemont, both art forms "were equally subject to derision by the guardians of bourgeois High Culture. These two *despised media* were thus well situated to express the deep and secret longings of the most despised sectors of the population: the most exploited of the proletariat, immigrants, blacks, slum-dwellers, hoboes, drug victims, prostitutes, lunatics…"[17]

As recent American right wing demagoguery grows more and more divisive, we hear the members of the above list being derided on conservative radio talk shows as "useless eaters" – a phrase also used by Joseph Goebbels to describe everyone in Germany not exactly like him. As noted by Jim Trombetta, Goebbels and his colleagues were a major inspiration for some of the more grisly and memorable comic book horror stories of the 1940s and 1950s. Come to think of it, the fear-mongering phrase "a poisonous mushroom growth" isn't all that dissimilar to the rhetoric used against the outcasts and undesirables of Germany during the 1930s and 1940s. Goebbels, of course, was quite conversant in the techniques of naïve propaganda, and knew full well that the greatest political tool is always *distraction*.

"WITH NAÏVE LITERARY LOGIC THEY WAITED FOR VIOLENCE TO FLOOD THE WORLD"


EC
NO.22 MAY
CRIME
10¢
EC
SUSPENSTORIES
JOLTING TALES OF TENSION IN THE EC TRADITION!

On 20 July 2012, immediately after 24-year-old James Holmes shot and killed 12 people (and seriously injured 58 others) in a movie theatre in Aurora, Colorado, during a midnight showing of Christopher Nolan's Batman film *The Dark Knight Rises*, pundits on both the left and the right began to blame the massacre not on guns or on the man who pulled the trigger, but on comic books and movies based on comic books. Right wing radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh, only a few days after the shooting, said: "How do you blame the guns for this? The guns to do this kind of thing have been around for all kinds of time, but you can peg other elements in our culture that have been around a lot less time and have much more influence." It's difficult to believe that comic books and comic-book-inspired movies could have "much more influence" than all the guns sold in the United States, but there's that inimitable Limbaugh logic for you. Limbaugh proceeded to lay most of the blame on Tim Burton's 1989 "dystopian" (Limbaugh's description) *Batman* film, one of the main inspirations for which was Frank Miller's graphic novel, *The Dark Knight Returns*. It's instructive to note here that if one reads Gary D Rhodes's recent book *The Perils of Moviegoing in America*, an exhaustive and yet highly entertaining history of America's tumultuous relationship with the cinema, one will discover that movie theatre shootings predate the first commercial comic book (*Famous Funnies* in 1933) by at least 10 years and Tim Burton's *Batman* film by about six decades.

On the same day as the Aurora shooting, the *Washington Examiner* strongly suggested that Holmes was directly inspired by Frank Miller's work. The *Examiner* wrote that the shooting "bears eerie similarities to a scene in the 1986 comic *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*. In the comic, a crazed, gun-toting loner walks into a movie theatre and begins shooting it up, killing three in the process." Several other newspapers, television shows and blogs made similar connections.

The 20 April 1999 shootings in Littleton, Colorado, perpetrated by teenagers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold at Columbine High School, were blamed at the time on a DC/

BETTMANN / CORBIS

ABOVE: Canton, Ohio, 1954: Unfortunate youngsters are coerced into handing in their horror and crime comics in exchange for uplifting children's classics; 10 comic books were worth one hardback volume. Such book swaps took place across the US in 1954-1955, often climaxing in mass comic book burnings.

Vertigo comic book entitled *The Trenchcoat Brigade* by John Ney Reiber and John Ridgway, which debuted only a month before the massacre. The allegation at the time was that Harris and Klebold had modelled their look and attitudes on the black-clad, raincoat-wearing occultists who were the protagonists of the fantasy series.

Other contemporary examples abound, but the important point is that this blame game goes way back. In the 1950s, the Cold War mindset created an environment in which the blame game was ubiquitous and almost inescapable. Needless to say, Communism emerged as the scapegoat of choice. In a country where politics has always been entwined with the good/evil duality of Christianity, perhaps it was inevitable that the Communist Party of the 1950s would be seen as an all-purpose Bad Guy on a par (and literally *in league with*) Satan himself. Communism was a menace that even the God-fearing rubes in the back pews could wrap their brains around. When it came to the subject of juvenile delinquency, horror comic books served a function similar to that of Communism. But far more inexplicable and disturbing than the imaginary monsters of a four-colour comic book universe were the horrors that lurked within the twisted psyches of *real people*. Of course, the unpredictable perversity of individuals can never be regulated by policemen and judges and senators; nonetheless, the citizenry always demands simple solutions to complex problems. The blame game, therefore, shows no sign of dying out; it simply morphs and adapts to the times.

The parallels between 1954, the year the Comics Code Authority was formed, and the past couple of decades are striking. If it's not comic books turning your kids into killers and rapists, it's marijuana. If it's not marijuana, it's hip-hop music. If it's not hip-hop music, it's Harry Potter. If it's not Harry Potter, it's violent cartoons. If it's not socialists attempting to subvert American values, it's undocumented Mexican labourers. If it's not welfare mothers trying to steal your hard-earned cash and maxed-out credit cards from your pocket, it's the Public Broadcasting System and *Sesame Street*. If it's not a black ex-convict named Willie Horton (or an ex-football-hero-turned-bogeyman named OJ Simpson) threatening to stalk the streets of well-to-do white neighbourhoods, it's a black Muslim foreigner who magically wrested the Presidency away from Senator John McCain back in 2008 with his esoteric voodoo powers (so claim the tea-partying "Obama birthers," the latest, and perhaps most absurd, version of McCarthyites America has seen in a long while).

The moral here is as simple and loud and garish as any blood-splattered panel in a 1950s horror comic: Goebbels's propaganda techniques did not die with him. As in so many horror stories, the past never remains buried. And that crude, but effective, plot device known as the "simple art of distraction" reigns supreme.

Like Herman Lasher's ill-fated experiment 50 years ago, Jim Trombetta's *The Horror! The Horror!* – particularly when read in conjunction with the related volumes under discussion here – brings with it unforeseen side effects; however, these side effects are by no means negative. Perhaps without even intending to do so, these archival editions brimming with decades-old comic book spook stories urge us to ask a crucial question: From what real-world horrors are *we* being distracted in this bright new 21st century future? FT

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

ROBERY GUFFEY lectures in English at California State University, Long Beach. He is the award-winning author of articles for a wide range of publications, including FT, and the book *Cryptoscatology: Conspiracy Theory as Art Form* (Trine Day, 2012).

NOTES

1 Jim Trombetta, *The Horror! The Horror! Comic Books the Government Didn't Want You to Read!*, New York, Abrams ComicArts, 2010, p26.

2 Ibid, p23.

3 Ray Zone and Chuck Roblin, *Forbidden 3-D*, Los Angeles, The 3-D Zone, 1993, p4.

4 Jim Loftus and Mark Aarons, *The Secret War Against the Jews*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1994, pp51-52.

5 Christopher Simpson, *Blowback*, New York, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988, pp58-60.

6 Zone and Roblin, p7. For more detailed information on this aspect of covert US history, see the book *Official and Confidential* by Anthony Summers. By the way, you might be interested to know that I'm currently looking at a facsimile of a comic book published in the mid-Fifties; this comic was authorised by the FBI and has J Edgar Hoover's face emblazoned on the cover. Above J Edgar's pug-nosed mug is the appropriate title: *CALLING ALL BOYS!* No doubt, those "in the know" in Washington, D.C., had a field day with that one.

7 Zone and Roblin, p8.

8 Ibid, p8.

9 Simson, p176.

10 Myron Sharaf, *Fury On Earth: A Biography of Wilhelm Reich*, New York, Da Capo Press, 1983, p361.

11 Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1971, pxviii.

12 For specific examples see Sharaf, Chapter 22.

13 Trombetta, p81.

14 Zone and Roblin, p24.

15 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, New York, Signet, 1964, p154.

16 The transgressive nature of jazz, by the way, is a recurrent theme in some of these mid-century horror comics. Jazz can be a source of either wonder or fear, or perhaps even both at the same time. For example, a recently published compendium of 1950s DC comic books, *Showcase Presents: Tales of the Unexpected Vol. 1*, leads off with a 1956 story drawn by John Prentice entitled "The Out-of-the-World Club" in which we learn that the most innovative jazz musicians on Earth are actually alien outlaws who are capitalising on their unique musical talents in order to raise enough money to buy "radioactive minerals" without which their disabled spacecraft will be unable to take off from this cultural wasteland called Earth. The story manages to elevate jazz musicians to something more than human (i.e., extraterrestrials) while also casting them in the iniquitous role of "criminals," for it turns out that the aliens are just trying to beat a bum wrap on a prison planet in a distant solar system. But, hey, aren't we all?

17 Franklin Rosemont, *Surrealism and Its Popular Accomplices*, San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1980, p62.

TERROR AND WONDER

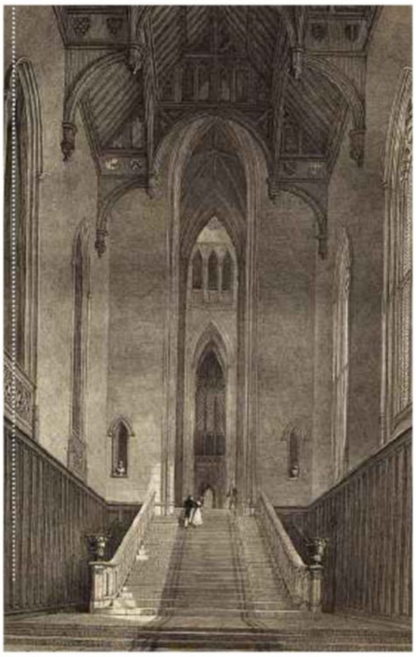
AS A MAJOR NEW EXHIBITION EXPLORING OUR FASCINATION WITH THE MYSTERIOUS AND MACABRE OPENS AT THE BRITISH LIBRARY, **GAIL-NINA ANDERSON** EXPLORES THE ROOTS OF THE GOTHIC IMAGINATION IN ART, ARCHITECTURE AND LITERATURE

It was a dark and stormy night…[1] Somehow, it was always dark, often stormy and not infrequently split by huge terrifying flashes of lightning. Welcome to the world of Gothic fiction, where landscape and weather reflect a dark universe of sinister passions, age-old secrets, fear, menace and foreboding. This is essentially an arena of the untrammelled imagination – so untrammelled that sometimes it topples over into the surreal or even the absurd (think how often you've laughed at a horror film – it can be difficult to keep a straight face at the far edge of the improbable). And yes, although the Gothic doesn't *always* involve the supernatural, it is definitely a fortean-friendly zone, fuelled by strange coincidences and unlikely events (plus the occasional skeleton, phantom nun or family curse). It also draws on motifs from folklore, happily dabbles in ancient texts and should never, ever be read by susceptible young ladies alone in an ancient chamber by the light of a flickering candle.

But, as we constitute a more robust readership, we may with impunity explore the genre that brought us Dracula and Frankenstein, morphed to include the Urban Gothic of Steven King and Ramsey Campbell, and inspired a generation of pale young persons to dress in black and wear industrial amounts of eye-liner.

And, yes, the term Gothic does derive from the Goths, an East German people whose plundering forays in the fourth century hastened the decline of the Roman Empire. This gained them the historical reputation for being barbaric and anti-classical – two concepts that would emerge as major threads in Gothic literature. The term as we're employing it, though, arrives at its present usage via an architectural insult. From the 12th to 15th centuries Northern European architecture developed what we now call the Gothic style (certainly not called that at the time and nothing to do with marauding tribes). This initially French building type involved soaring pinnacles, pointed arches, flying buttresses, elaborate carved decoration and the lavish use of stained glass: nothing barbaric there, but also nothing classical. Italy never took to this "French Style" but during its own Renaissance revived instead the structurally starker forms of ancient Roman architecture. Writing to the Pope in 1516, the painter/architect Raphael dismissed the elegant, northern building type as "Gothic", presumably meaning anti-classical, and the term stuck though it ceased to be an insult.

THE GOTHIC IS ESSENTIALLY AN ARENA OF THE UNTRAMMELLED IMAGINATION

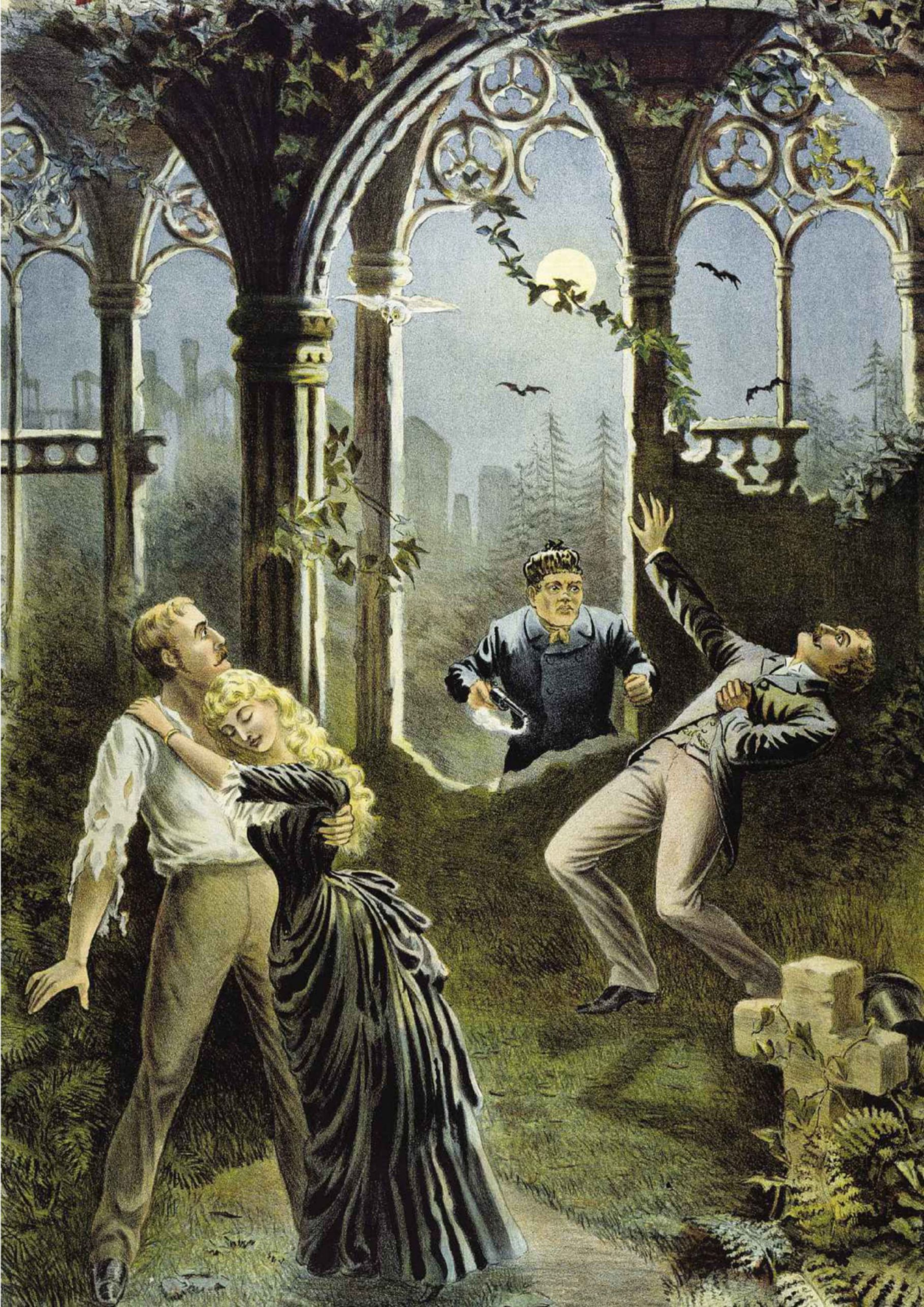


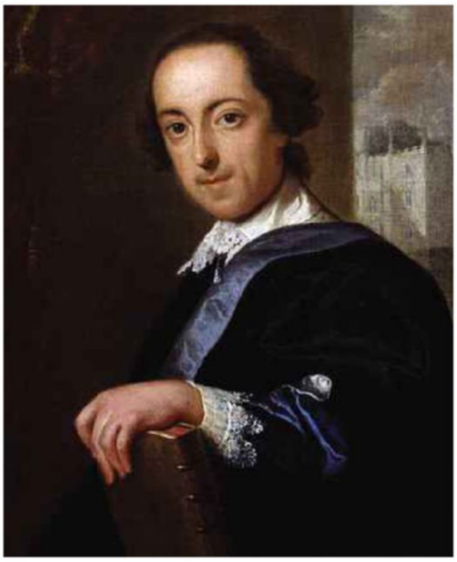
LEFT: Flamboyant Neo-gothic excess in the interior of William Beckford's Fonthill Abbey. **FACING PAGE:** Gothic themes galore in a poster for the play 'Manhood', performed at the Elephant and Castle Theatre, July 1890.

BRITISH LIBRARY

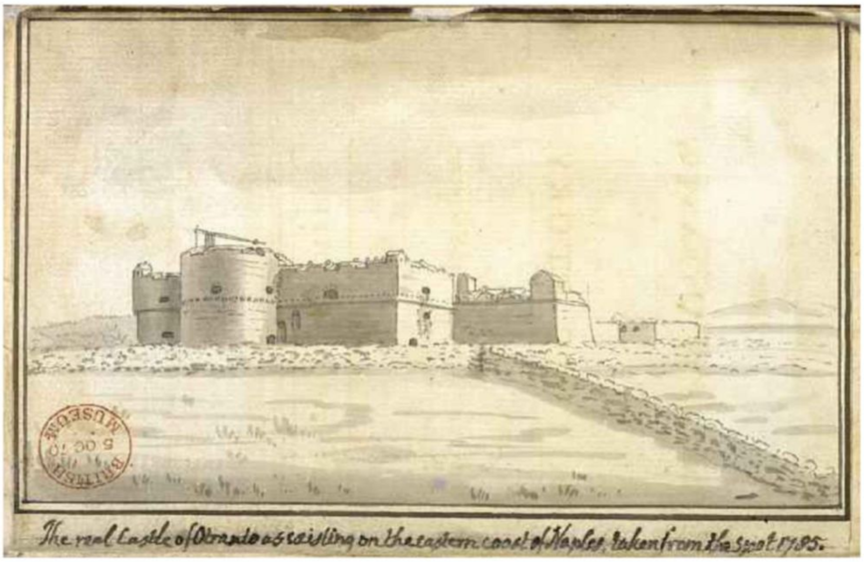
OUT OF THE PAST

So the Gothic might relate to the Dark Ages or to the sophisticated flourishing of the Middle Ages. During the 18th century the term would have suggested an alternative to the "Age of Reason" with its classically inspired framework of rational thought and categorisation. Instead, it implied the opposite – any arena where the unfettered and potentially dangerous imagination held sway. This was Romanticism rather than classicism, sensibility rather than sense, feeling rather than reasoning. The attractions must have been obvious, but this dialogue wasn't defined all at once, and contributing roots of the Gothic Revival can be traced through changing tastes and gentlemanly pursuits. One was the growth of antiquarianism, where it became fashionable to research the ancient ways of British history via obscure documents, monuments and oral tradition (all of which would play a significant role





BRITISH LIBRARY / NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON


The real Castle of Otranto as existing on the eastern coast of Naples, taken from the spot 1785.

BRITISH LIBRARY

ABOVE LEFT: Horace Walpole, in a 1754 portrait by John Giles Eccardt, with Strawberry Hill in the background. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Watercolour of the 'real' Castle of Otranto in Horace Walpole's personal copy of *The Castle of Otranto*. **BELOW:** Strawberry Hill as it appears today.

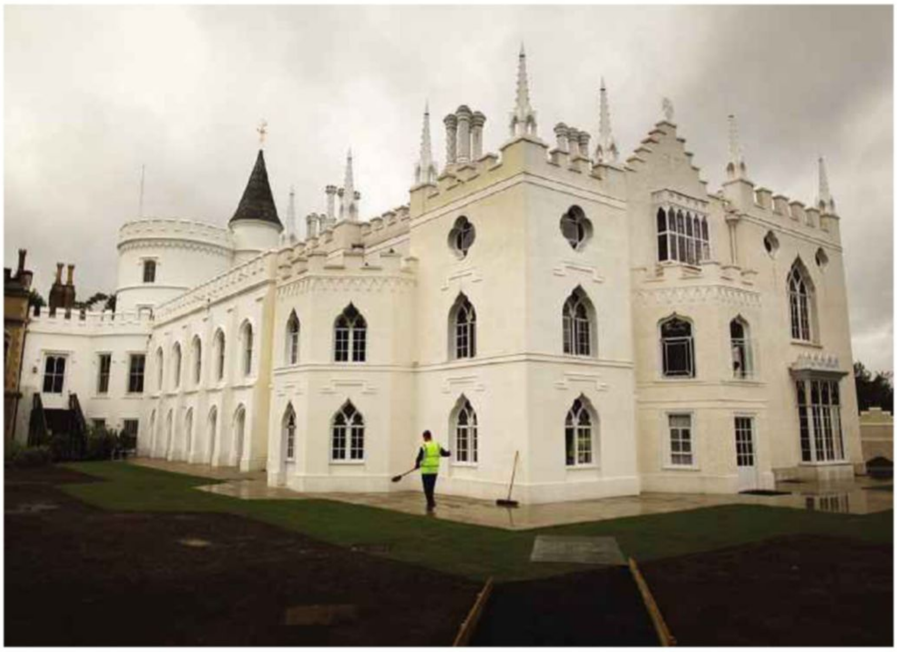
in the typical Gothic plot type). The Society of Antiquaries had existed since the late 16th century, but the granting of a Royal Charter in 1751 formalised a learned group dedicated to illuminating the historical past, while more informal local research became an approved pastime for country parsons and squires. Traditional forms of literature that might once have been dismissed as crude made a popular reappearance, via such collections as the immensely influential *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* published in 1765. The compiler of this collection of ballads, Bishop Thomas Percy, found many of them in a manuscript folio that a maid was dismembering to light the fire, and was thus able to introduce a new audience to a literature of illicit romance, chivalry, dragons, ghosts and Robin Hood. Appreciation of landscape, both in nature and art, also played a part, with the cult of the picturesque and the more adventurous "sublime" teaching viewers to look not for a tranquil view but irregularities and ruins, crags, gorges and gloomy forests which (especially if viewed by moonlight) could provide a landscape that echoed deep poetic sensibilities. For those who liked their pleasures more urban and their romance more melodramatic, this was also the period of when the theatre was hugely fashionable and, courtesy of actor/manager David Garrick, became the location for what was virtually a cult of Shakespeare, cementing his reputation as the greatest of English playwrights. Far from being seen as stuffy classics, the plays opened sensational windows onto a past where fairies, ghosts, predictions and visions appeared as part of our literary heritage.

> THE STORY WAS INSPIRED BY A DREAM IN WHICH HE SAW A GIANT ARMOURED HAND

All of this helped create a new fascination with a past heavily coloured by what had previously been dismissed as "mere" superstition (including, in the rather arid protestant Anglicanism of 18th century Britain, a prurient interest in what was viewed as corrupt mediæval Roman Catholicism).

THE CASTLE OF HORACE WALPOLE

If there is one figure who acts as a focus for these disparate trends it must be Horace Walpole (1717-1797), aristocrat, landowner, son of a prime minister and himself an MP (for Castle Rising in Norfolk, a borough characterised by the ruins of a Norman Castle). Waspish, sickly, addicted to gossip and of undefined sexuality, Walpole indulged in a creative form of antiquarianism that led him to collect, build and write out his mediæval fantasies. His collection included ancient armour, Tudor miniatures and the "black stone" with which the Elizabethan mage Dr Dee supposedly summoned spirits. (This is a mirror-like piece of polished obsidian that may well have belonged to Dee, but is now also thought to be of Aztec origin, dated somewhere between the 14 and 16th centuries.) Strawberry Hill, his modest Thames-side house at Twickenham, was imaginatively transformed into the first significant (if flimsy – the battlements were made of pasteboard) work in what became the Gothic Revival in architecture. [2] In 1764 Walpole cemented his role as cover boy for the Gothic movement by publishing, anonymously, *The Castle of Otranto*, purportedly a translation from the Italian. The first edition of 500 copies sold so well that in a second edition, subtitled "A Gothic Tale" he admitted his sole authorship of this wildly extravagant story set (more or less) at the period of the Crusades. Apparently inspired by a dream in which he saw a



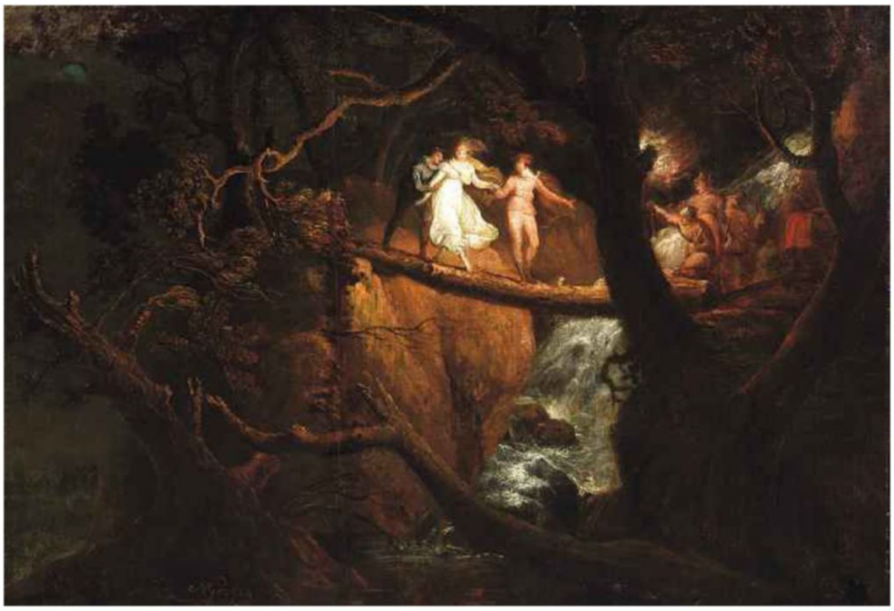
GETTY IMAGES

giant armoured hand, Walpole concocted an outrageous piece of high-camp melodrama that, despite its earlier setting, obviously reflects his admiration for Hamlet and interest in Tudor politics (he was a thoughtful apologist for Richard III). In a vast castle, the heir to an Italian principality is suddenly crushed to death by the unheralded appearance of a gigantic helmet (yes, the uncanny imagery permitted by the Gothic novel certainly invites Freudian analysis, seeming to pop straight out of the unconscious and, like the novels themselves, promising the revelation of hidden wonders and unsavoury secrets). His father then divorces his wife and attempts to marry his daughter-in-law, but his plans are disrupted by additional items of the armour, a family curse, a perambulatory ancestral portrait, a usurped heir recognised by his birthmark, a mysterious friar, a bleeding statue and several deaths, including his own.

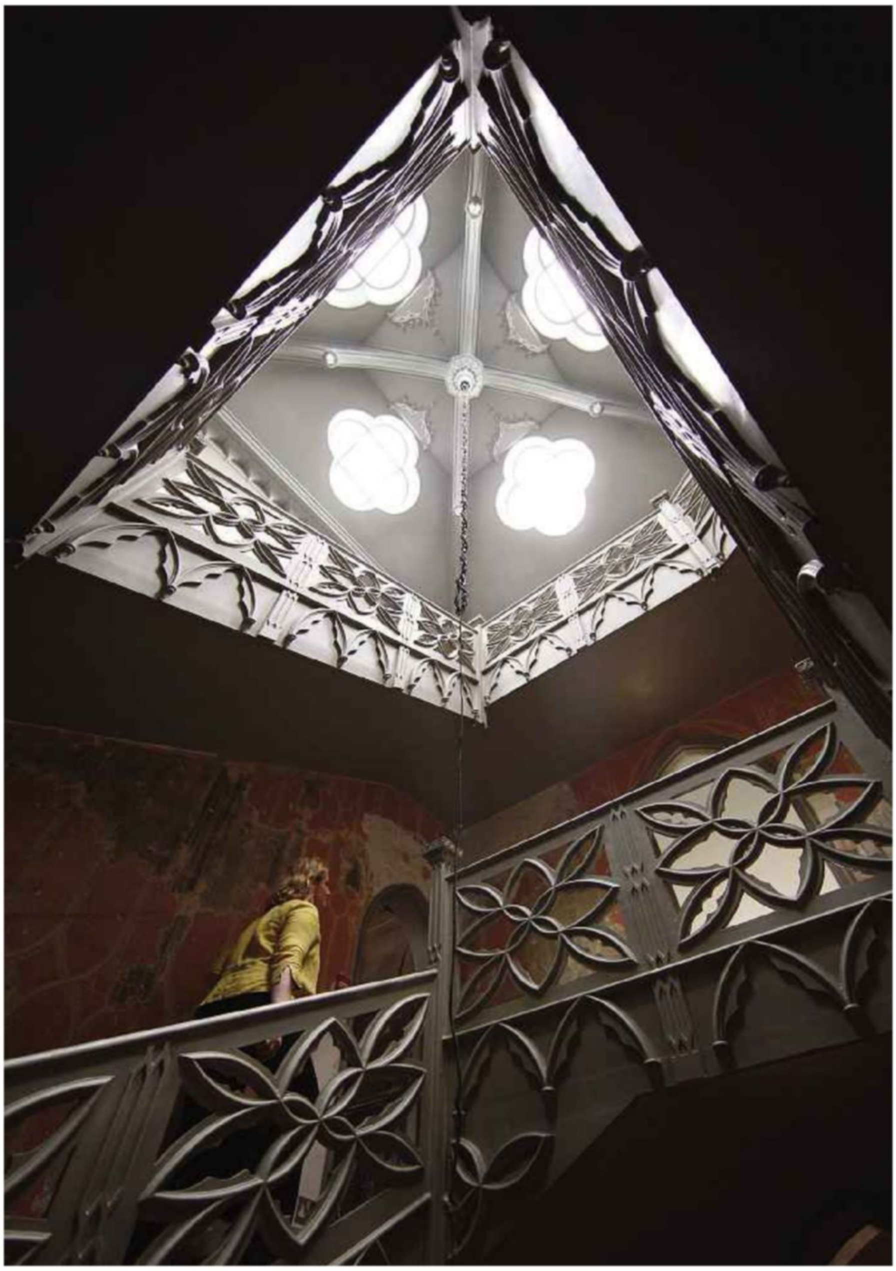
The tropes of the genre are gathered together so quickly and comprehensively that the Gothic novel seems to have sprung fully formed from its progenitor's pen. Of course, many of these motifs were already culturally familiar through folklore, drama and early romances, but *The Castle of Otranto*, whatever its debated literary merits, sets an imitable narrative pattern for the 18th century and beyond. The malevolent yet heroic villain/hero, the imperilled maiden, the irrevocable impact of the past on the present and an undertone of perverse sexual menace all loom large. The sexual element here verges on the incestuous – in his Gothic drama of 1768, *The Mysterious Mother*, Walpole took this several steps further, having his protagonist marry a girl who, unknown to him, is both his sister and his daughter. Privately printed, the play was not publically performed until 2001.

ARABIAN FRIGHTS

Though it took a while to build momentum, *Otranto* would prove to be influential as well as popular: in 1777, Clara Reeve effectively recycled many of its motifs in *The Old English Baron*, toning down the bizarre supernatural elements and changing the setting to mediæval England. More exotic possibilities were explored by William Beckford, another wealthy eccentric of uncertain sexuality involved in collecting, politics and architecture – in this case the building of Fonthill Abbey, a pseudo-ecclesiastical edifice constructed disastrously quickly. Beckford lived there in solitary splendour, despite continuing structural problems. To hurry on the completion of the new Abbey kitchens, he once declared he would only eat his Christmas dinner if it was cooked there. On Boxing Day the kitchens collapsed. The Abbey was intended to have a tower and spire built to a structurally unsound height of about 90ft (27m), which twice fell down and had to be rebuilt. Financial problems forced Beckford to sell Fonthill in 1822. The tower collapsed for the third and last time in 1825. Despite demonstrating such a mediæval affinity in his domestic arrangements, Beckford's Gothic novel *Vathek*, written in French and published in translation in 1786 (anonymously, and claiming to have come from an Arabic manuscript) presented a sinister tale



BRITISH LIBRARY / NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND

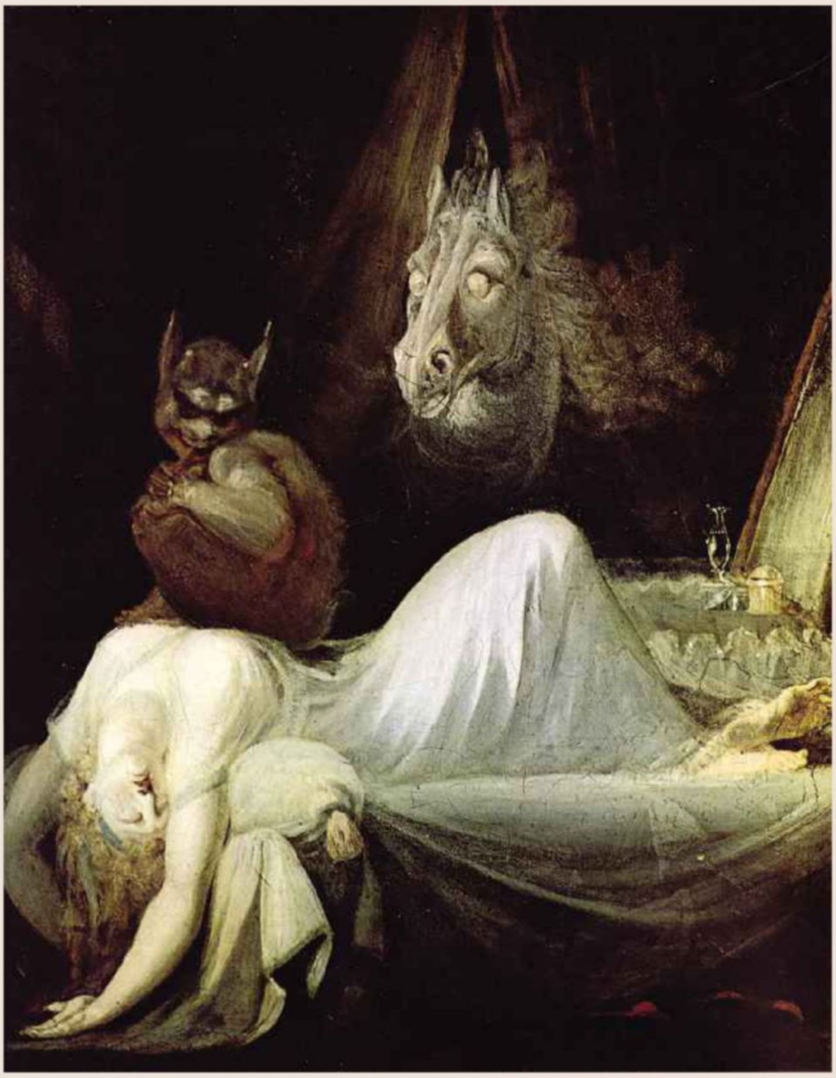


GETTY IMAGES

TOP: Nathaniel Grogan's *Lady Blanche Crosses the Ravine Guided by the Count and St Foix, a scene from 'The Mysteries of Udolpho'* painted in the late 1790s. **ABOVE:** A suitably Gothic staircase at Walpole's Strawberry Hill.

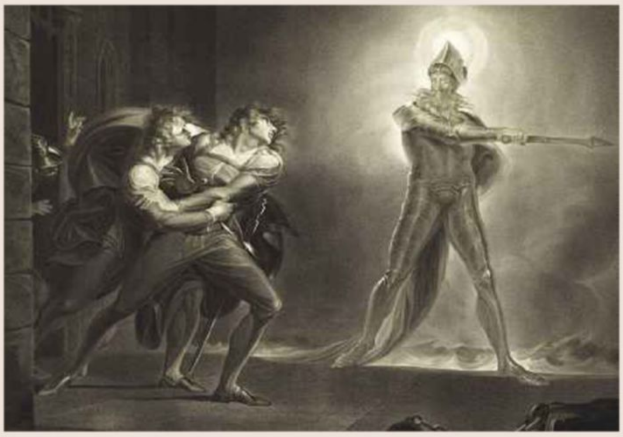
THE NIGHTMARE

GAIL-NINA ANDERSON LOOKS AT THE KEY PAINTING THAT ENCAPSULATES AN ENTIRE GOTHIC AGENDA



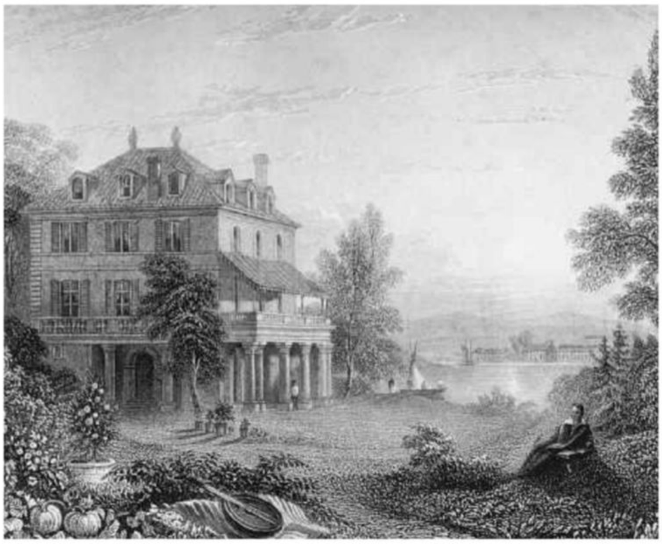
The supernatural (except where part of the Christian tradition of belief) isn't well represented in the traditions of Western art. In England, the Reformation had broken even the tradition of mystic religious imagery and by the 18th century the pictorial imagination was wilting in the most profitable but predictable genres of landscape and portraiture, both emphasising naturalistic representation. Artistic fantasy, however, got a boost with the foundation of the Royal Academy in 1768 and the increasing popularity of public exhibitions, which demanded more original and dramatic subjects to catch the critical eye. Sadly, the early Gothic novels didn't get picked up as pictorial source material, though the influence of their exaggerated sensibilities can be traced in the apocalyptic landscapes of John Martin (see **FT281:34-39**) – criticised at the time for their pandering to a low taste for the sensational. Indeed, where overtly Gothic imagery did emerge it was usually in the more popular forms of illustrations, satirical cartoons and cheap prints or – even less respectable – as part of the multi-media "Phantasmagoria" entertainments where early forms of projected imagery could, in a suitably concocted setting, apparently raise spirits. Even on the walls of the Academy, however, the weird and wonderful could be made acceptable by a suitable literary pedigree, Shakespeare being the most popular source. Taking greatest advantage of this opportunity was Anglo-Swiss painter Henry Fuseli, who plundered the works of the Bard for scenes of ghosts, visions and fairies. More unusually, he shared the Gothic attraction towards northern, non-classical legends and painted scenes from Norse mythology. Classical dignity was never part of his expressive, exaggerated style, and in 1782 he challenged the decorum of the Academy with a subject of his own devising, drawn from the traditions of folklore, *The Nightmare.*

The painting proved so popular that he produced at least four variants, the best-known of which now hang in the Detroit Institute of Arts (the original) and the Goethe Museum, Frankfurt (this one most often appears on book covers because of its portrait format.) *The Nightmare* encapsulates an entire Gothic agenda: in a bonelessly limp posture an unconscious girl, draped in something between a nightdress and a shroud, presents the epitome of feminine vulnerability, apparently not even aware of the devilish imp that squats on her torso, while an almost phosphorescent, blank-eyed horse pushes its way with phallic menace through the curtains. The girl is being hag-ridden – subjected to that feeling of constriction associated with bad dreams and sleep paralysis – and the horse is the night-*mare* (although the term has nothing to do with horses and instead refers to a goblin/demon; Fuseli has effectively shown both interpretations.) What the viewer sees, the girl experiences, making us voyeurs of a scene pulsing with sexual menace and metaphor. Like the first wave of Gothic novels, the work was criticised for its absurd horror but proved vastly popular. Reproduced as a print it was (and still is) often parodied in political cartoons, and was magnificently recreated by Ken Russell in his 1986 film *Gothic*, which pays eccentric tribute to the gathering at the Villa Diodati and the creation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.* That Sigmund Freud owned a reproduction of *The Nightmare* speaks volumes about the dark depths encoded in the imagery of the Gothic.



ABOVE: Fuseli's *The Nightmare*. **LEFT:** Fuseli's suitably Gothicised image of the ghost of Hamlet's father in Boydell's Shakespeare.

BRITISH LIBRARY



HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

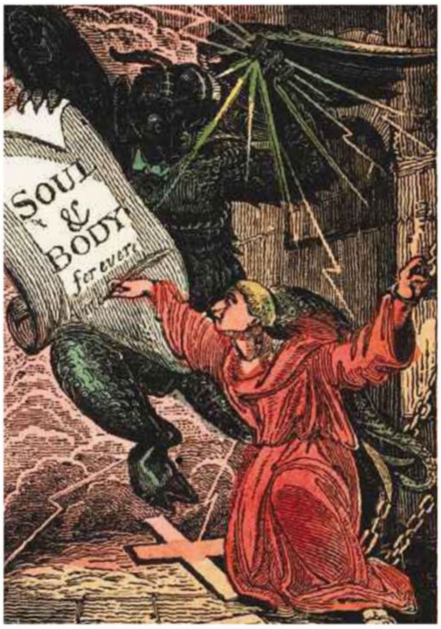
BRITISH LIBRARY / THE KOBAL COLLECTION

ABOVE LEFT: The Ville Diodati, where an 1816 literary gathering gave birth to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The book's genesis is recalled in the prologue of James Whale's 1935 Universal film *The Bride of Frankenstein*. **BELOW:** The frontispiece of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*; Lewis was an inspirational visitor to the villa.

of hedonism, pride and the occult set in the world of the *Arabian Nights*. This extra element of distance allowed for more extravagant degrees of transgression, with the characters choosing to interact with demons and djinn in the pursuit of pleasure and knowledge. The world of *Vathek* is overtly fantastic – portals open, inscriptions change and magic is a commodity, in contrast to the more established Gothic mode where the supernatural intrudes into a more-or-less recognisable world.

THE MYSTERIES OF MRS RADCLIFFE

By the turn of the 18th/19th centuries, Gothic sensationalism and sentiment had become overtly visible within mainstream Western culture, with the French *roman noir* and German *schauerroman* developing national variants. When Mrs Ann Radcliffe produced her six popular novels between 1789 and 1802 (the last one, *Gaston de Blondeville*, appearing posthumously in 1826), she was consolidating these trends, with *The Mysteries of Udolpho* becoming the predominant example of literary Gothic at its height. Hers is a world of craggy continental landscapes where persecuted young lovers face terrifying dangers at the hands of charismatic villains eager to conceal the secrets of the past. Thrilling as her writing was, with a generation of young female readers held breathless in anticipation as they awaited the next volume from the circulating library, still it won the genre a level of respectability. Excepting some rather mild ghosts in her last novel, she only *flirts* with the supernatural, suggesting its presence then (infuriatingly to this reader) explaining it away. This was in contrast to the most notorious novel of the 1790s, *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis. This no-holds-barred rollercoaster ride through incest, murder, rape, transvestism, demonic seduction, Inquisitorial torture and the odd Bleeding Nun, all set in dangerously superstitious Madrid, can still shock – poor imprisoned Agnes dabbling her fingers in the corrupted flesh of her dead baby shows Lewis revelling in the sort of visceral horror unknown to Mrs Radcliffe. First published in 1796 when its creator was only 20, it was a great success, winning praise from Lord Byron and the Marquis de Sade and earning its author the nickname "Monk" Lewis.



Lewis also wrote for the stage, and his *The Castle Spectre*, first produced in 1797, reflects the taste for melodramatic dramatic spectacles complete with elaborate scenery and special effects. Popular as these were, however, the first phase of the Gothic phenomenon was by this time becoming tired, producing many plays and novels that have not enjoyed a revival or entered into the academic canon because, essentially, they simply offered variations on established themes. Jane Austen's lightly satirical *Northanger Abbey* (written in 1798-9 though not published until 1817) reveals a situation in which young ladies exchanged lists of suitably "horrid" novels with the intention of scaring themselves silly and warns of the dangers of interpreting real life through the distorting lens of their Gothicised imagination. Enjoying such a fashionable popularity, the Gothic was bound to become outmoded. The more general Romantic Movement, however, with its emphasis upon the stimulation of the imagination, could encourage and accommodate fresh developments where the castles didn't creak and the morals weren't mediæval.

THE MONSTER CLUB

Almost too well-known to need telling is the story of Lord Byron's 1816 trip to Lake Geneva in company with his young physician John Polidori, where visitors to the Villa Diodati included Percy Bysshe Shelley, his teenage lover Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and Mary's step-sister Clare Clairmont. The family/sexual complexities of this group already suggest a Gothic plot, with atmosphere added by the Swiss setting and the gloomy weather. Visionary poet Shelley had already published two Gothic novels, *Zastrozzi* and *St Irvyne or: The Rosicrucian*, so would have been on familiar territory when the party began to compose spooky stories. This was the birth of Mary Shelley's (to use her more familiar married name) *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (first published 1818), the central image of which came to her, in true Gothic fashion, in a dream. Despite an obvious relationship to the genre, however, *Frankenstein* could also be classified as Science Fiction, moralising as it does about the limits of scientific human intervention upon the development of humankind. An inspirational visitor to the Villa Diodati at just the right moment was Matthew "Monk" Lewis, recounting ghost stories that Mary noted down in her diary. He was also, however, full of news about his sugar plantations in Jamaica and his concern for the slaves who worked there, so might also have influenced the political issues that underpin the story of an intelligent creature never accorded human status.

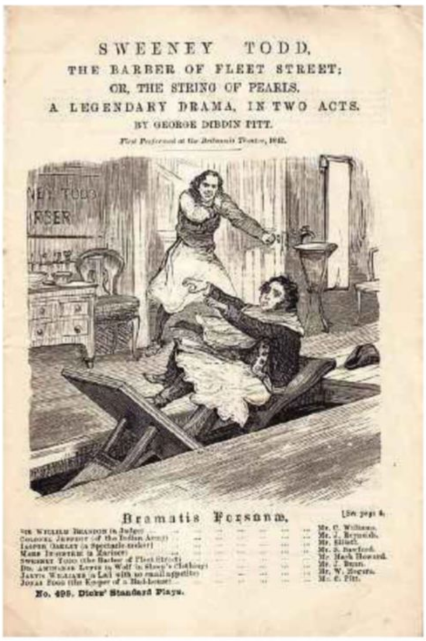
The other Gothic archetype who made a spectacular entrance via the Diodati party was the vampire, although unlike Frankenstein's "Creature" he was not an original creation but a denizen of eastern European folk traditions about death, illness and impurity. Indeed, he may be said to have entered the Western

No. 1.] Nos. 2, 3 and 4 are Presented, Gratis, with this No. [Price 1d.
VARNEY THE VAMPIRE, OR THE FEAST OF BLOOD.
A ROMANCE OF EXCITING INTEREST.
BY THE AUTHOR OF "GRACE RIVERS; OR, THE MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER."

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

SPRING-HEELED JACK,
THE TERROR OF LONDON.

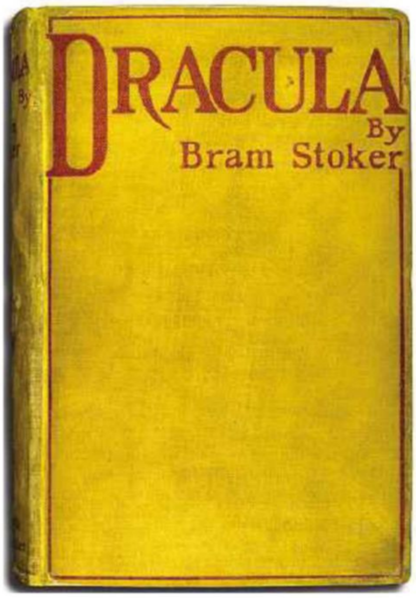
BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD


SWEENEY TODD,
THE BARBER OF FLEET STREET;
OR, THE STRING OF PEARLS.
A LEGENDARY DRAMA, IN TWO ACTS.
BY GEORGE DIBDIN PITT.
Dramatis Personæ.
No. 499. Dicks' Standard Plays.

ABOVE: A growth in literacy created huge audiences for the Victorian Gothic of the Penny Dreadfuls. **BELOW:** The 1897 first edition of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

cultural awareness via Imperial bureaucracy rather than Romantic fantasies. When Romania came under the control of the Austrian Empire, a military and bureaucratic presence in remote areas observed at first hand previously unrecorded burial practices and superstitions. Becoming the subject of official reports, news of these began a lively debate known as the 18th century Vampire Controversy. Learned papers (such as Dom Calmet's *Treatise on the Apparitions of Spirits and Vampires…*of 1751) were published, the vampire won a mention in Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* and the idea began to seep into European literature; but it was John Polidori's *The Vampyre* published in 1819 that took the earthy un-dead corpse of folklore and translated it into a darkly potent Gothic anti-hero. Inspired both by Byron's beginning of an unfinished vampire tale and subsequently by his growing dislike of Byron himself, Polidori's novella created an aristocratic, sexually charismatic vampire who preyed on young women, an attractive supernatural fiend who could function in polite society and whose long shadow is still visible today.

VARNEY THE VAMPIRE MEETS HIS SPECTACULAR DEMISE IN A BLAZING VOLCANO



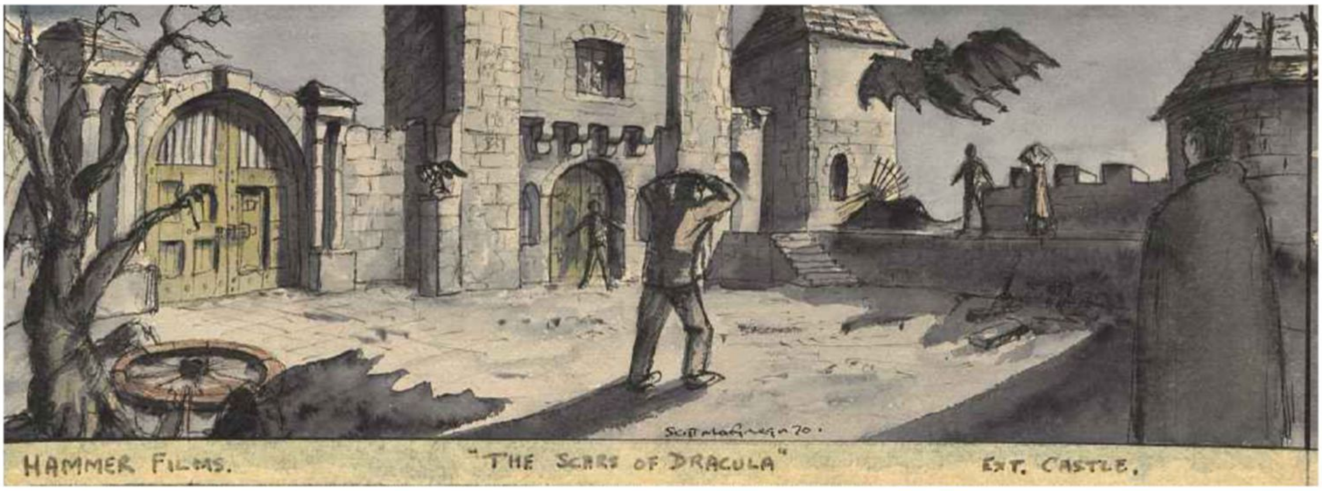
BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD

VICTORIAN GOTHIC

Victorian Gothic, created in the context of new sensibilities and changing tastes, developed along different routes. A growing increase in literacy created an unsophisticated audience for the "ripping yarns" style of serialised Penny Dreadfuls, in which a terrifying yet compelling protagonist such as *Varney the Vampyre* [3] could dash his way through 220 chapters before his author, presumably by this time thoroughly exhausted by the whole enterprise, sends him to his spectacular demise in a blazing volcano. Combining with a popular taste for lurid crime stories, real-life or fictional, the genre also came to encompass the darker side of human behaviour within a (more or less) believable context, creating such characters as Sweeney Todd. [4] "Cheap and nasty" as they were, the Penny Dreadfuls do chime with the Gothic mood that pervades much of Dickens's work, whereby 19th century London is re-created as a shadowy labyrinth of dark alleys, stews and prisons, where heartless villains are corrupted not by the Devil but by greed, respectability and social power. This marks the start of that style of Urban Gothic where the conditions of modern life replace crags and dungeons to transform the mundane and familiar into a new landscape of the uncanny. Certainly, the Gothic novel needed a new context for its action, as the 18th century's fantastical pasteboard castles of deep gloom but undefined period would have been risible to a new generation of readers who absorbed their mediævalisms through the infinitely better researched writings of Sir Walter Scott. Despite Scott's antiquarian love for ancient ballads and old tales and superstitions collected through the oral tradition, his version of historical romance involved a degree of period accuracy that tolled the death-knell for *Otranto*'s absurdist melodrama.

Similarly, the more educated Victorian audience demanded a deeper analysis of personality, to be found in what might be called the Bronte school of Gothic introspection. In *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights* the dark house or brooding moors may echo a capacity for feeling and empathy so intense that it verges on the supernatural, but it is the characters who hold this power inside them, lifting them above the mundane and into a world of exaggerated awareness. Instead of phallic turrets and womb-like caves, the sexual imagery implicit in the Gothic is now expressed (or often more potently *repressed*) by the emotions of the characters, creating an internalised realm of shadows and desires that still feels modern.

The overtly supernatural tale took on a more economical shape in the flourishing magazine culture of the 19th century, which encouraged the production of short stories. No longer inflated into novel length, the tradition of the English Ghost Story pruned away elaborate plots to place a single motif or phenomenon centre stage. Arguably


Scott MacGregor 70.
HAMMER FILMS.
"THE SCARS OF DRACULA"
EXT. CASTLE.

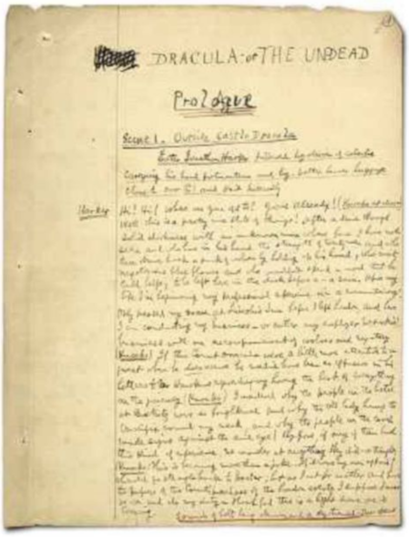
BRITISH LIBRARY / ON LOAN FROM THE NATIONAL FIOM ARCHIVE

BELOW: Bram Stoker's novel quickly made the leap from page to stage: Stoker's notes for his theatrical production of *Dracula: or the Undead*. **ABOVE:** Stoker's Count has also enjoyed a long life on the screen: set designs for the Hammer film *Scars of Dracula* show the Gothic imagination still going strong in 1970.

the most poetic author in this field was not English but American – the distilled weirdness of Edgar Allan Poe's best tales, heavy with a seeping, obsessive morbidity, could never have been conveyed through novel-length writings. A brief visit to the tomb should, after all, be more than enough. A new school of genuinely antiquarian authors, led at the end of the century by the inimitable M R James, also found that the short story allowed a concentration on the (not to be explained away) manifestation of the supernatural, usually explored in relation to folklore traditions and/or mysterious artefacts and documents. By this period the *non-fictional* exploration of the supernatural, via the popularity of Spiritualism and responding organisations such as the Society for Psychical Research, had prompted a new interest in the realm of the ghostly, analysing meanings and mechanics in a way far distant from the simple sense of terrified wonder conveyed by the novels of the previous century.

REINVENTED TRADITIONS

Full-length novels did, of course, continue to exploit Gothic themes. Wilkie Collins, for example, infuses what are really early detective stories with a visionary intensity that adds a note of haunting strangeness. Our ever-growing fascination with Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, published 1897, might designate this as the abiding triumph of Gothic literature, but its late Victorian style measures a huge distance from its Gothic roots. There is indeed the wild foreign landscape where a feudal lord can still hold sway to the extent of imprisoning a visitor in a decaying cliff-top castle for reasons too horrible to contemplate, though instead of a swooning maiden his victim is now a young solicitor. The action starts and concludes in Transylvania, but the bulk of the novel is set in a decidedly contemporary England, where modern medicine, communication and social structures would have placed the original readers firmly in their own familiar world. The supernatural doesn't take us to a fantastic realm of the imagination, but infiltrates the security of the everyday, creating a dialogue of anxiety that changes the role of the reader by demanding the recognition that mundane reality might be no more than a fragile, piecemeal construct. Modern authors such as Stephen King and Ramsey Campbell, Anne Rice and Charlaine Harris are both the heirs to this development and the creators of endless new sub-genres.


DRACULA: or THE UNDEAD

Prologue

Scene I. Outside Castle Dracula

BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD

By the period following the First World War, the Gothic felt sufficiently outmoded as a popular form to begin its revival as an academic one. The splendidly eccentric scholar Montague Summers (inevitably, an acquaintance of Aleister Crowley, whose fascination with the occult he shared, albeit from an opposing viewpoint) wrote a biography of Mrs Radcliffe and published new editions of *The Castle of Otranto* and other 18th century texts. In 1938 his *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* looked back on the origins of the genre, defined its qualities as a literary form and explored both context and development. Such impulses to give the Gothic tradition a scholarly shape have promoted their own wild wanderings, with the original novels now firmly classified as a significantly transgressive literary form and promoted to a key role on the academic curriculum. With the texts more readily available than ever before, the Gothic has triumphed at a cost – revived but subjected to rational dissection. Perhaps a fortean audience, wary of any fashion that fixes a meaning on the products of imagination, might still try to reclaim that original sense of happily irrational terror and wonder, with or without a flickering candle. **FT**

FOOTNOTES

[1] This is the opening line of the 1830 novel *Paul Clifford* written by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Since 1982 San Jose State University has sponsored an annual Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest which invites the composition of the worst imaginable opening lines to the worst novels. Lytton himself was a formidable and influential novelist, whose *Zanoni*, *A Strange Story* and *The Haunted and the Haunters* all explore Gothic themes, while his *The Coming Race* is an early example of weird science-fiction.

[2] The 18th century variant spelling of "Gothick" is sometimes preferred, to indicate that the first buildings to revive the style did so in an almost frivolous manner with few concessions to structural types of real mediæval architecture.

[3] The author of this epic work remained anonymous but it is usually attributed to James Malcolm Rymer, with Thomas Preskett Prest as an alternative possibility.

[4] Sweeney first appeared in *The String of Pearls: A Romance* which appeared between 1846 and 1847. The probable authors were Prest and Rymer, possibly alternating between each part of the serial as it was published.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

GAIL-NINA ANDERSON is a lecturer and historian of art and culture and a longtime contributor to FT. She recently curated 'The Postcard: A Voyage of Discovery' at Newcastle's Literary and Philosophical Society.

Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination is at the British Library, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB, from 3 October 2014 to 20 January 2015.

www.bl.uk/whatson/exhibitions/gothic/index.html

INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE QUEEN

THE RETURN OF ANNE RICE

After a decade away from her Vampire Chronicles, during which time she's been writing books about Christ, the queen of modern vampire fiction is back to reclaim her bloody throne from the young pretenders. She spoke to **ANGELINE B ADAMS** and **REMCO VAN STRATEN** about her long career and her latest book.

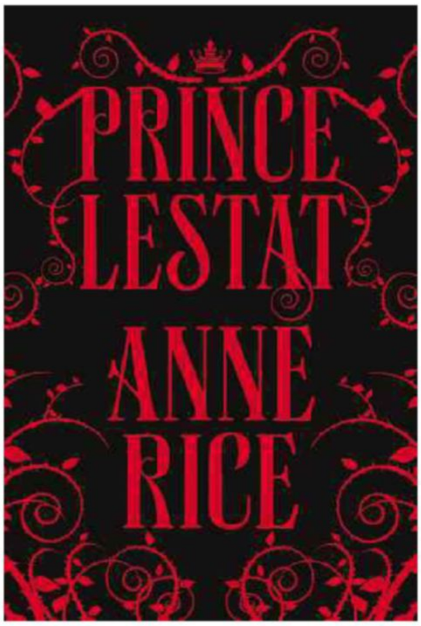
While vampires have been consistently popular over the last decade, with *Twilight* and *True Blood* successfully transitioning to film and TV, the writer who started the whole craze has been conspicuously missing in action. However, after she drew a determined line under her Vampire Chronicles more than a decade ago, Anne Rice is now set to wrest the sceptre of foremost vampire writer back from the clutches of Stephenie Meyer and Charlaine Harris.

LESTAT LIVES!

The title of her new novel, *Prince Lestat*, leaves no doubt as to which modern vampire hero really rules. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* may still be the king of them all, but after him no vampire has had such success and impact as the real hero of Rice's 1976 debut, *Interview with the Vampire*.

Prince Lestat was announced on 9 March of this year on *The Dinner Party Show*, the Internet radio programme co-hosted by Anne Rice's son Christopher – an announcement that made waves because it completed the reversal of her 2003 farewell to the series. Then, the writer whose horror was famously informed by her loss of faith, announced that she had returned to Christianity and dedicated her writing career to God. As twists go, it was hard to beat, but Rice has been reinventing herself for a long time, and after some careful forays back into the horror genre, her return to the Vampire Chronicles has not been completely unexpected.

SHE FOCUSES ON HOW THE UNDEAD MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE PRESENT



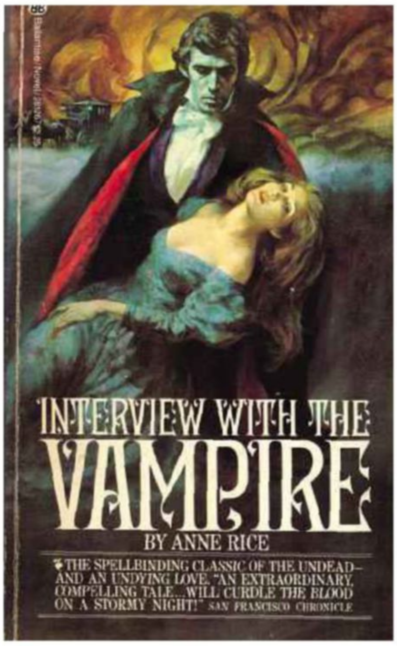
The break has invigorated her though: "I could not have written a book like *Prince Lestat* in 2003," she told us. "After an absence of 10 years, I found I had a fresh take on the characters and their ongoing story, and new ideas. I started to reread the Chronicles and I was soon bubbling over with new things to write."

The new book, the first in a projected series, contrasts with previous Chronicles, as, in her own words, she doesn't see herself "mining the series for more backstory memoir books." Instead, she focuses on how Lestat and the other undead meet the challenges of the present. A comparison with other modern day vampires may seem inevitable, but Rice is reluctant to be drawn into one: "I honour the imagination of Stephanie Meyer and Charlaine Harris but they approach the vampire in a different way from the way I approach it. They tend to domesticate the blood drinker, explore him as the guy next door; the guy you meet in high school in biology class; the guy you run into at the neighbourhood tavern. My focus has always been on the vampire as hero, as great tragic figure, transcending time and life, a larger than life being who pays a ghastly price for his immortality and powers."

Of all the things you can do with an immortal, a vampire, the last thing you should do is send him back to high school, over and over again. Rice refuses to defang her vampires: Lestat is still big; it's the other

MICHAEL LIONSTAR

ABOVE: Anne Rice today. **BELOW:** The book that started it all – a transfusion of fresh blood to the genre.


INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE
BY ANNE RICE
"THE SPELLBINDING CLASSIC OF THE UNDEAD– AND AN UNDYING LOVE. "AN EXTRAORDINARY, COMPELLING TALE...WILL CURDLE THE BLOOD ON A STORMY NIGHT!" SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

vampires that got small. In *Prince Lestat* a growing vampire population begs Lestat to come out of seclusion and lead them, as a mysterious Voice urges vampire elders to massacre the young. But Lestat's got his own problems, as the Voice alternately berates and seduces him. It's hard not to see this as a parallel with Anne Rice's own return to the series; Lestat appears to be in her blood, and can no longer be denied.

NEW ORLEANS BLUES

Anne Rice can be said to have reinvented herself for the first time in childhood. She was born in New Orleans as the second of four daughters in the O'Brien family, and lumped with the unlikely name of 'Howard Allen'. On her first day of school she was quick to change that to 'Anne'. Anne lost a great deal of security when she was 15 and her mother died. She and her sisters were sent to boarding school, something she later described as "something out of Jane Eyre". Some years later, the family, with addition of a stepmother, was uprooted to Texas, where Anne met her future husband Stan Rice, who became a formative influence on her. While the losses of her faith, her mother and her native New Orleans would be revisited in her later work, Anne would also draw on the love of stories, culture and history that her parents infused her with.

Anne and Stan married in 1961, both shy of 20, and moved to San Francisco, where they witnessed the birth of the hippie movement and, in 1966, that of their daughter Michele. Anne often found herself at odds with the Bohemian milieu in which burgeoning poet and artist Stan thrived, and wrote while others sought their escape in LSD and pot. She experimented with the realism of the time, but found the Gothic horror genre more to her taste.

In the early 1970s the Summer of Love gave way to the Autumn of Loss, and most hippies and bohemians dropped back in – Stan became at least halfway respectable as a lecturer at San Francisco State – or dropped down the rabbit hole of heroin addiction. One short story she began in 1968 but never finished, about a vampire who gets interviewed for radio, was picked up again in 1973, after Anne quit her job to focus on her writing. Betrayed dreams, indulgence and dependency run like red threads through it, but the real impetus for writing what would become *Interview with the Vampire* was the devastation the Rices felt at the loss of their daughter Michele to leukæmia, just short of her sixth birthday. In five weeks of frantic writing, much of it at night, Anne expanded the short story into a novel of guilt, wonder and existential crisis.

The basic plot of *Interview* hardly needs retelling; those who haven't read the book will have seen the movie or at least know roughly what it's about. Through its tragic narrator Louis, Rice would explore a lifetime's worth of doubts and fears, while Lestat acts as (tor)mentor, seducer and catalyst. We can see Stan Rice shining through here, though in later novels Anne would use Lestat as focal character and her own mouthpiece. Anne channelled her grief into the child vampire Claudia, who is doomed to stay a child forever, as Michele would remain in Rice's memory. If Claudia's death at the hands of a Paris coven of vampires is an attempt to find closure of a kind, then it's a bitter one.

FRESH BLOOD

Whereas the novel was a product of her personal influences, it was also a sea-change from its genre predecessors, in which the vampire was almost invariably portrayed as villain. There were some notable exceptions though, like Barnabas Collins in the late Sixties TV series *Dark Shadows*, and the heroine of the oft-overlooked sequel to Universal's 1931 *Dracula*. Anne Rice is happy to give the film its due: "I loved atmospheric black and white horror films made before I was born. *Dracula's Daughter*, a moody and sometimes beautiful vampire film with Gloria Holden from the 1930s, enchanted me when I was a child. It fixed the idea in my mind of the vampire as a tragic, doomed aristocrat, a being of exalted sensibility whose immortality had been procured at a terrible price."

At the time Rice became interested, the vampire was dead as far as cinemagoers were concerned. The Universal cycle had petered out with low-budget monster mashes some decades earlier; Hammer had rejuvenated the market with added colour and gore but the increasingly frustrated Christopher Lee found himself scraping the barrel of 'whatever can we do with him next' Dracula vehicles. The culture was ready for a fresh take on vampires: "When I wrote my first vampire novel, the subject was not mainstream and I do not think we had had any great films involving it in a very long time. When I set out to explore the whole idea in *Interview with the Vampire*, I went by instinct and didn't hesitate to make up my own cosmology."

While Rice has always loved classic ghost stories, it was Hollywood's transformative powers in reimagining vampires for an ever-changing audience (for good or bad) that paved the way for her approach. What she rightly saw was that horror can, should, be more than fleeting entertainment: "Horror and the supernatural have always been compelling to audiences, in one form or another. Humanity will always struggle with its relationship with the supernatural. It is the nature of the human condition to live with cosmic uncertainty."

And while exploring these questions she has brought to the fore what we've really always known: "The vampire is a powerful metaphor for the outsider in all of us, the predator, the being who realises he must destroy in order to prosper.” Bela Lugosi became an instant sex idol in the 1930s, and penny dreadful Varney the Vampire made bosoms heave as much as the Byron-templated *The Vampyre*. It’s small wonder then that “he is the most beautiful and seductive of all paranormal heroes; he’s the monster to whom you can talk, with whom you can reason, and with whom you can fall in love.”

OUT OF THE CELLULOID CLOSET

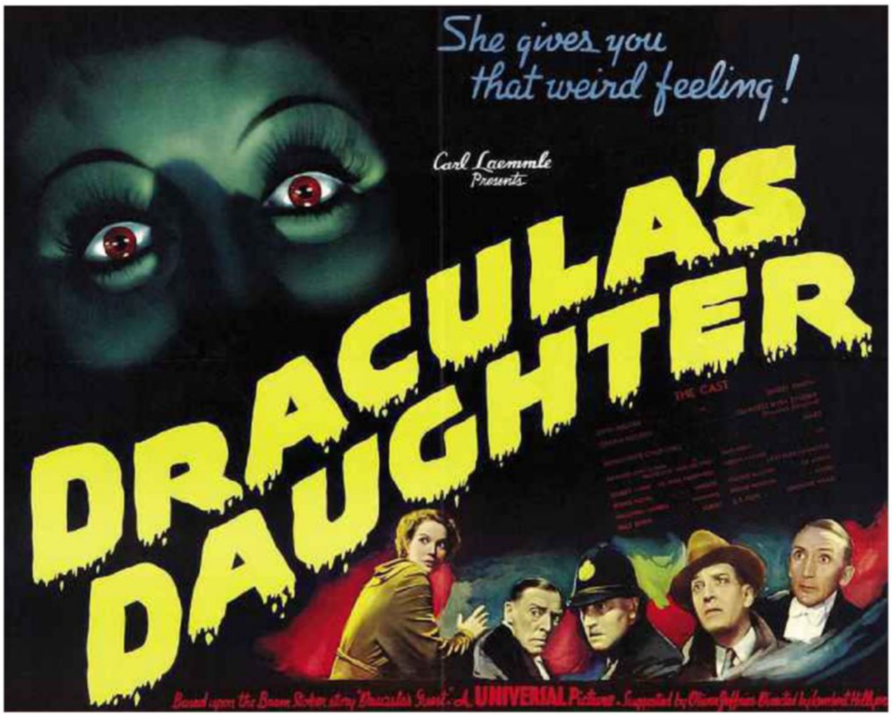
The success of Rice’s books is that she attracts a mainstream audience that is allowed to identify with the vampires, or at least allow themselves to be seduced by their glamour, but without losing the cult appeal that drew in her initial audience. Not that *Interview* was an immediate bestseller; it was only the 1977 paperback that turned the tide, backed by a publicity campaign that fed on the same public appetite that made hits of *The Exorcist*, *Carrie* and *Flowers in the Attic*. While *Interview* allowed housewives a legitimate erotic thrill – now offered more explicitly by the likes of *50 Shades of Grey* – the book became an important touchstone for early Goths, and the book tour of sequel *The Vampire Lestat* was notable for crowds dressed in black and lace, with some readers confessing themselves to be ‘real’ vampires.

The gay community also took the book to its heart, finding in it a very strong, and mainstream, validation of same sex relationships. From Polidori and Byron, Stoker and LeFanu’s *Camilla* onwards, there always had been a homoerotic undertone to the vampire genre, but it was always presented as a threat. Rice’s work transformed this frightening, repellent outsider into a symbol of empowerment: of course Lestat and Louis are a gay couple – there’s even deflowering of sorts – and the child vampire Claudia is their daughter, by necessity adopted. When Louis and Claudia escape abusive paterfamilias Lestat, they eventually find themselves amongst a troupe of actors in Paris, who form an underground society. There, the equivalent of gay society’s inner conflict of conformity to the norm and militant celebration of gay identity becomes Claudia’s undoing.

It was the barely hidden gay coding in *Interview* in particular that would make the book’s journey from page to celluloid long and arduous, with a succession of script outlines and different slants on how to handle the relationship between Louis and Lestat. In a bold move to mollify a studio uneasy with any hint of controversy, Rice suggested turning Louis into a woman, but eventually cooler minds persevered and both protagonists were allowed to remain men: the bond between Louis and Lestat could be seen as a bromance, and that would suffice.

With luscious golden locks and pouty lips, former pretty-boy actor Brad Pitt was still the next best thing to a stereotypical leading lady: his Louis is full of doubt, passive and only rallying, hysterically so, when his offspring is endangered. Rice always envisioned Lestat as a young Rutger Hauer, but to her horror she got Ur-yuppie Tom Cruise. It worked, though, and she is still very happy with the film that director Neil Jordan delivered: “It was a film that did not hesitate to go to extremes, to be transgressive, and it was amazingly faithful to the books. Amazingly so – though Neil [Jordan] made many changes of his own, and made it into art. Clearly the film is embraced and loved and after 20 years is as fresh and beautiful as when it was made.”

WITH HIS POUTY LIPS, BRAD PITT WAS THE NEXT BEST THING TO A LEADING LADY


She gives you that weird feeling!
Carl Laemmle Presents
DRACULA'S DAUGHTER
Based upon the Bram Stoker story "Dracula's Guest"
A UNIVERSAL Picture

ABOVE: The 1936 Universal film *Dracula’s Daughter* proved a source of inspiration to the young Rice.

The extravagance of Rice’s world found echoes in a *fin de siècle* renaissance of visually lush gothic movies – films like *Eyes Wide Shut* (Tom Cruise again), *Mary Reilly*, Kenneth Brannagh’s *Frankenstein* and of course Coppola’s *Dracula*, all pitched not at popcorn-munching teenagers, but to an adult audience, including women. Coppola’s *Dracula* precedes the *Interview* adaptation, but eschews Stoker’s arch villain for the tortured Ricean anti-hero with a tragic past. Rice’s portrayal of vampires has definitely been a game changer, but she is reluctant to claim credit: “I must leave this judgment or assessment to others. If I have influenced the genre or inspired others, I’m very grateful. In the beginning, with my first vampire novel, I was certainly very much alone. Many scoffed at the very idea of a serious novel about vampires. I suppose I feel vindicated in that vampires have now gone mainstream, and many writers are mining the rich concept of the vampire.”

There are elements of the Vampire Chronicles all over the modern vampire sub-genre, and it’s unlikely that the paranormal romance publishing juggernaut would have existed without Rice’s work. Laurell K Hamilton’s *Anita Blake* series features dandyish French vampires and a gradual transition to full-on erotica, while reflections of Louis and Lestat are clear in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*’s Angel and Spike, and the warring Salvatore brothers in LJ Smith’s *Vampire Diaries*. Meanwhile, Charlaine Harris’s *True Blood* brought the gay allegory of the Chronicles out into broad daylight, and to television, by portraying vampires as a minority with increasing legal rights and recognition.

BREAKING THE FAITH

During all this, though, Anne Rice drifted away from the genre she had invigorated. Her books grew in length and walked the tightrope of paranormal hijinks and, increasingly, religious enquiry. Despite their genre trappings, these were essentially philosophical vampire novels, hinting at Rice’s future as a religious author. Her perspective informed Lestat’s to the extent that she felt more than usual protectiveness of him and her other vampire children. She made an Internet novice gaffe in replying to unkind reviews on Amazon, and Cease and Desist letters went from her solicitor to anyone who dared to distribute Vampire Chronicles fanfiction. Though she has shown more leniency towards fan activity in recent years, using her Facebook page to directly communicate with her fans, who she calls her People of the Page, earlier attitudes towards her audience damaged her reputation.

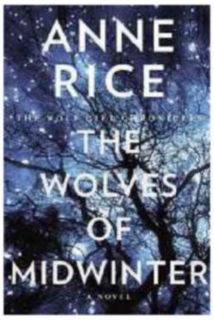
Before she returned to the fold of the

ABOVE: The extravagent and barely disguised homoeroticism of *Interview with the Vampire* was brought to the screen by Neil Jordan in a sumptuous 1994 film version.

Church, her vampire books had already been preoccupied with Christianity, with Lestat invited by the big bad himself to take over his job in *Memnoch the Devil* (1995), and being dragged, *Christmas Carol*-like, into different religious tableaux. Heady stuff, especially when Lestat meets Jesus on the road to Calvary, and – literally – drinks the Blood of Christ.

With *Blood Canticle* in 2003, Rice said she was tired of writing about outsiders; her theme of choice was now redemption. This encompassed the return-to-faith memoir *Called Out of Darkness: A Spiritual Confession;* two books from an intended series, *The Songs of the Seraphim*, about a time-travelling hitman chosen by angels to solve historical injustices; and in particular her books about the youth of Christ.

Lestat's messianic pretensions in *Blood Canticle* now read as pure chutzpah, and Rice as an author appeared to have lost control. In contrast her *Christ the Lord* books are remarkably restrained and intimate. This may well be because, once more, she could fully believe in her subject matter: Lestat was a square peg that she tried to squeeze into the round hole of Christianity, but by portraying Jesus himself her mission was less diffuse: "I took on a special challenge with the *Christ the Lord* novels: to make the Jesus of Scripture and Tradition real to a reading audience, without watering down anything. I wanted to present Jesus as God and Man, Divine and human, living in a world where an angel had come to his mother to announce his conception, a world in which shepherds did see angels singing at the hour of his birth."



While she still has strong beliefs, Rice has turned away from organised religion, which she found too constraining. Meanwhile, her dialogue with her People of the Page increasingly gravitated towards her Vampire Chronicles. With her werewolf novel *The Wolf Gift* she made a determined swerve back to her old monster stomping grounds. Seen in that light, perhaps Lestat's been on his way back for a while, though his official return is being orchestrated with clockwork precision. When something does go wrong, it is quickly fixed: the UK cover of *Prince Lestat* didn't go down well with fans and was replaced by one that left more to the imagination. With impeccable timing, the news broke that Universal Pictures and Imagine Entertainment have optioned the existing Vampire Chronicles and *Prince Lestat*. Furthermore, Rice convinced her son Christopher, a successful novelist in his own right, to write a screenplay, also optioned. While he originally feared accusations of nepotism, she has complete faith in him.

All in all, Anne Rice appears to be fully at peace with herself, her world and her work, and in the four decades since *Interview with the Vampire,* the narrative supporting the Vampire Chronicles has shifted from devastation at the loss of her daughter to being the proud mother of an accomplished son. For all that she has meant to the vampire genre and horror in general, she is practical about the legacy she would wish for: "I'd love to be remembered for the scope of my work and my relentless drive to tackle supernatural topics, for my fearlessness in taking on the controversial and the transgressive. To put it much more simply, I'd love to be remembered for writing books that people love." **FT**

Anne Rice's *Prince Lestat* will be published on 30 October by Chatto & Windus. *The Wolves of Midwinter* will be published in paperback. The British Library is hosting an exclusive midnight opening on 29 October at which ticket holders will receive a signed edition of Prince Lestat and entry to the 'Terror and Wonder' exhibition www.bl.uk/whatson/events/event167092.html

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

ANGELINE B ADAMS & REMCO VAN STRATEN live and work in Belfast, where their lives are ruled by an Alien Burmese Cat. They have previously written for FT on Robert E Howard, Roger Corman's Poe cycle and Sinterklaas.

REFERENCES

Richard Primuth, "Vampires Are Us", *Gay & Lesbian Review*, 11 Feb 2014: tinyurl.com/q4upttr.

Nola Cancel, "Christopher Rice on 'The Vines', 'The Vampire Chronicles' and Universal, Examiner.com, 16 Aug 2014: tinyurl.com/o3ogfl3.

Katherine Ramsland, *The Vampire Companion: The Official Guide to Anne Rice's The Vampire Chronicles*, Ballantine Books, 1995.

Katherine Ramsland, *Prism Of The Night: a Biography of Anne Rice*, Penguin Books, 1992.

Anne Rice, *Called out of Darkness: A Spiritual Confession*, Chatto & Windus, 2008.

Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire*, Alfred E Knopff, 1976.

Francis Ford Coppola & James V Hart, *Bram Stoker's Dracula: the Film and the Legend*, Newmarket Press, 1992.

THE FIRST FORTEANS

9. *THE PUBS AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE*

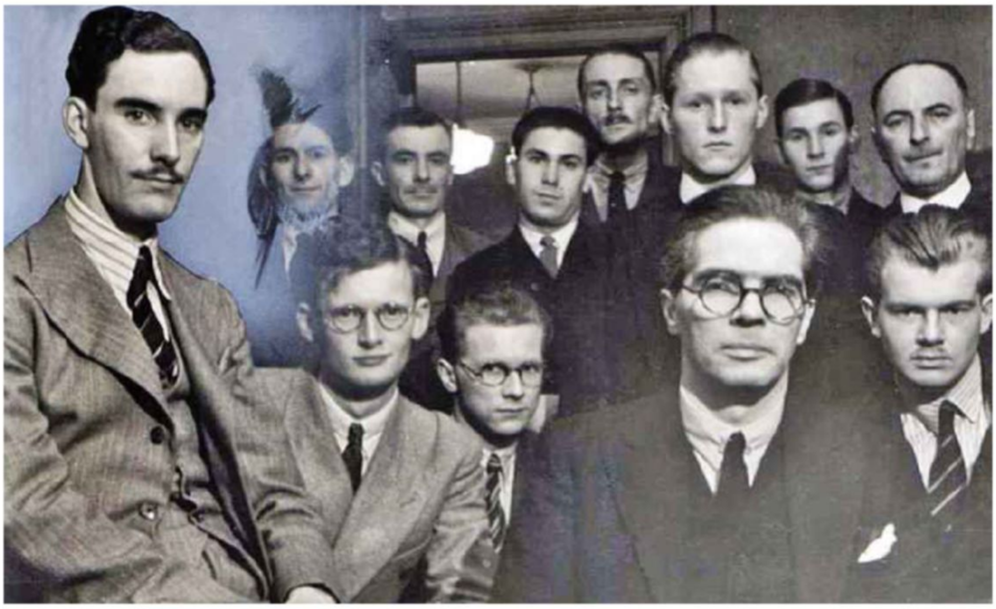
Who were the First Forteans? British fortean lineage began in the early 1930s, when Charles Fort was still alive and his books quite rare in these isles. **BOB RICKARD** continues his rummage for our fortean roots.

In the year following the 1937 inaugural SF convention in Leeds (see FF1, **FT308:38-39**), regional fandom in the UK – mainly in Leeds, Belfast, Nuneaton, Glasgow and Barnsley – reluctantly bowed to the power of the growing numbers of active fans in London. In London this consolidation formed around the group that straddled both the newly formed Science Fiction Association (SFA) and the older British Interplanetary Society (BIS). Stephen Baxter called them "the Inklings of the genre" such was their influence and legacy.

In Liverpool, BIS founder Philip Cleator, who disagreed with the move of its HQ to London, resigned his leadership. One source noted that the membership had become increasingly disgruntled by Cleator's autocratic rule; in particular, BIS Secretary Leslie Johnson was unhappy that Cleator had arranged for the newly immigrated rocket scientist Willey Ley to give a talk but did not tell anyone about it until the last minute. Another casualty was Eric Frank Russell, who lost interest in the BIS when it moved south (see FF2, **FT309:50-51**); however, this left him free to enjoy his new role as the UK agent for the Fortean Society, sending packets of news clippings regularly to Tiffany Thayer in New York.

In June 1938, Arthur C Clarke – now 21 and auditing pensions for the Treasury – was living in a tiny bedsit in Norfolk Square, beside Paddington Station, when he was visited by another prominent SF fan, 24-year-old William Temple (1914-2010). They had many interests in common; both were active members of the BIS and SFA, loved classical music and all aspects of science fiction. Temple had just got a job at the Stock Exchange, so they decided to get an apartment together.

They found it at 88 Grays Inn Road, a few hundred yards from Chancery Lane Underground station and less than two minutes' walk from Druid's Hall, in Lamb's Conduit Street, where, two months earlier, the UK's second SF convention had been held. Among the 43 fans attending were other names featuring in our narrative: Clarke and Temple, of course, but also fanzine editors Maurice Hanson (a confessed fortean) and Harry Turner (both of whom chronicled this period); Ted Carnell (soon to become the publisher of the influential *New Worlds* magazine; Walter Gillings (founder of the very first UK SF fan group, in Ilford); writers John Russell Fearn and John Beynon Harris (aka John Wyndham); Benson Herbert (of whom more in a later instalment); Leslie Johnson (EFR's friend and co-founder of BIS); Idrisyn O Evans (publisher of the Fitzroy Edition of Jules Verne (see FF6, **FT314:50-52**); and Prof AM Low, the celebrity science broadcaster.



ABOVE: This image was made to record the historic first meeting of the London branch of the BIS in October 1936. Among those present were Ted Carnell (left) later to become BIS secretary and editor of *New Worlds* from 1946-1964. Seated next to Carnell is 19-year-old Arthur C Clarke. Looking over Clarke's shoulder is Walter Gillings, founder of the first UK fan group. Prominently front right is Prof. Archibald Low, later elected president of the BIS, in whose Piccadilly office this was taken. The picture appears to have been prepared for publicity as Prof Low has been patched in and Carnell was being 'masked' for a portrait.

E JOHN CARNELL, COURTESY OF PETER WESTON

IN 1938, THE NEWLY FORMED SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION BEGAN HOLDING MONTHLY EVENTS AT DRUID'S HALL, OWNED BY THE ANCIENT ORDER OF DRUIDS

The newly formed Science Fiction Association began holding monthly events at Druid's Hall, owned by the Ancient Order of Druids, ending the year – December 1938 was bitterly cold – with a Christmas mini-con there. Two films were shown – *The Secret of the Loch* (1934), during which Nessie's appearance was enthusiastically booed, and *White Hell of Pitz Palu* (1924) starring Leni Riefenstahl – after which Harold 'Poltergeist' Chibbett (see FF3, **FT310:50-51**) gave an account of three of his PROBE team investigations. It is worth quoting the review in Hanson's *Novae Terrae* (Jan 1939):

"[The] *spook-hunter thrilled the company with seasonable ghost stories, which had the invaluable quality of being true: they were three of Harold's own experiences. (It was late now, and very dark, and the wind howled more loudly over the roof.) The first concerned the raising of an Elemental; the second an encounter with an evil spirit (the Devil?) one night on Hampstead Heath (H solemnly exhibited the seat of his trousers, scorched and brimstoned); and the third, adventures in an old cottage haunted by a monk. He passed round an infra-red photo taken in the dark during the latter manifestations, and this showed a curious object apparently being thumped against the wall by a black hand without a body. No one hitherto knew what it was, but Mr Passingham* [1] *recognised it as a vessel of religious significance, and H was highly excited at this. "Are you sure?" he kept repeating. "Why, this bears out the story of the monk!" The company broke up soon after, and dispersed in* *twos and threes, hurrying down the shadowy stairs in a not-too- easy state of mind.”* [2]

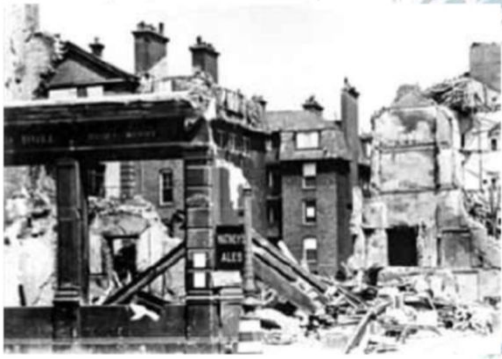
Sid Birchby – then aged 19, another of our earliest forteans (see FF3, **FT310:50-51**) – described a visit to Temple and Clarke shortly after they moved into their Grays Inn eyrie. He wrote approvingly: “The place is very snug, though, and should be a good spot for us all to congregate of an evening!” And congregate they did, to the extent that the place became famous in fannish folklore as ‘the Flat’. It was soon declared the official headquarters of the BIS and venue for the monthly meetings of its London branch. Here BIS members constructed instruments for its ‘Moonship’ project, so the fan-lore goes, including an inertia-governed altimeter tested on the deep escalators of Chancery Lane tube station. [3]

The flat became a priority for visiting SF fans; among the first of these was Harold Gottliffe – whom we have to thank for his photos of those days – brought along by Ted Carnell. Here too came Maurice Hanson, who was invited by Clarke and Temple to be the Flat’s third occupant. As Hanson’s fanzine *Novae Terrae* – the UK’s first fanzine, created in 1936 by Hanson when he lived in Nuneaton – had been elected to be the SFA’s official organ, so the Flat added an editorial office to its other functions.

The consolidation did not stop there. Not long after Hanson’s relocation, the London SFA decided to move their Thursday meetings – said to have been chosen because it was Ted Carnell’s weekly half-day off [4] – at first from the Lyons tea-shop on New Oxford Street to the Flat, and, a short time later, to a pub located conveniently at the end of the Flat’s terrace. The Red Bull wasn’t the first meeting in a pub, but it was the first regular venue for the London circle’s traditional weekly Thursday gatherings.

Bill Temple’s diary of these days provides more rare glimpses of those key forteans Sid Birchby and Harold Chibbett, numbered among the regulars at the Red Bull; Chibbett in particular frequently giving talks. For example, entries for 1940 include: 29 April, “*Chibbett turned up with a hypnotist who had got in the news lately for having one of his clients having a tooth out under hypnosis without an anæsthetic.*” He tried hypnotising Bill but failed. 19 May, Chibbett gives a talk on current research “*into the subconscious mind, hunting for memories of past people*”. [5]

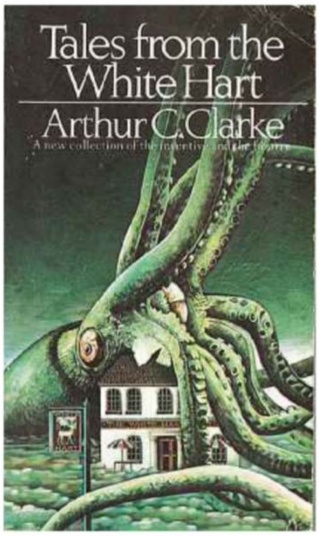
ROB HANSEN



E JOHN CARNELL, COURTESY OF PETER WESTON

COURTESY OF ROB HANSEN’S FIAWOL.ORG

ABOVE LEFT: 88 Grays Inn Road, still standing in 2010. **TOP RIGHT:** The ruins of the Red Bull, destroyed in an incendiary raid in 1941. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A lively fan gathering in the bar of the White Horse. **BELOW:** A 1970s paperback edition of Arthur C Clarke’s *Tales from the White Hart*, a tribute to the White Horse where regular meetings were held for a period of seven years.



When the sustained bombing of London began in September 1940 – the Blitz lasted until May 1941 – severe restrictions were imposed upon travelling in or though the city. Before the month was out Bill Temple and Ted Carnell had been called up. The final fan-scheduled gathering at the Red Bull, in October, was a mere shadow of what went before. One fan, George Medhurst, managed to convince tube staff “that his journey on the Central Line was not frivolous, and made his way to the pub to find that Sid Birchby, already in uniform, was the only other person to turn up.” Medhurst then reported to Michael Rosenblum’s *Futurian War Digest* “the Blitz has effectively put an end to fanactivity in London”. [6]

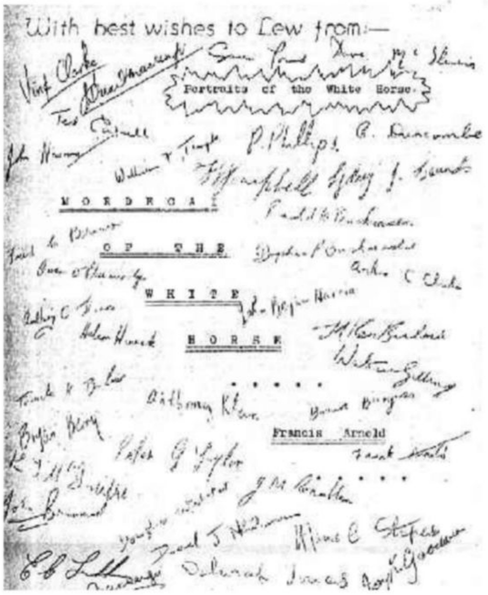
By late 1941, it was widely believed that the old meeting places of the London SFA – Druid’s Hall, the Flat, and the Red Bull – had been destroyed during the enemy incendiary raids of 16 April and 10 May. Druid’s Hall was indeed lost in the inferno and never rebuilt, and the pub was reduced to ruins. The Flat somehow sustained minimal damage (it was repaired and is still occupied today). Had the Temples (Bill, his wife Joan and baby daughter Anne) not vacated early, they too would have been lost in the raid.

Bill Temple – on brief leave from the 36th Signal Training Regiment – visited the site a year later and described in his diary what he saw: “*Back up Grays Inn Rd., rather shaken to see a great segment of Grays Inn had been removed permitting us to peep into that hitherto secluded interior. But the ruins just below the Flat were terrible & of the Red Bull… where we were to meet again after the war, only a pitiful column & a crosspiece remained, with THE RED BULL inscribed upon it – it looked like the remains of a Grecian temple. The flat seemed untenanted & we mounted the shaky stairs & found it was so… All the rooms, including the flat, were full of broken glass & plaster & splintered wood. We used to boast that if you stood on a chair in the bathroom you could see St Pauls. You didn’t need a chair now. You had a fine view of it through the glassless windows – all the intervening buildings seemed to have been knocked down & you gazed at it rising out of a waste of ruins.*”

Despite a valiant attempt by Sid Birchby to reform the London SFA in February 1941, nothing much happened until 1946, when fans began regular meetings at The Shamrock in Fetter Lane. The previous month, Ted Carnell had met Ken Chapman (on Chapman’s discharge from the Navy) in the pub to discuss the transmutation of *Novae Terrae* into *New Worlds* as the flagship magazine for British writers. Again, the Temples, Chibbetts and Birchbys were united with old friends.

In March that year, increasing numbers and a universal desire for a more accommodating venue – Shamrock patrons were restricted to the wartime ration of a single half-pint – necessitated a move to The White Horse, on the corner of Fetter Lane and Norwich Street, where they met for the next seven years. The pub itself achieved a degree of immortality when Arthur Clarke published *Tales from the White Hart* in 1956, an anthology of humorous stories written, according to Clarke’s preface, “between 1953 and 1957 in such diverse spots as New York, Miami, Colombo, London and Sydney”. These short stories centred upon the thinly-disguised fictional White Hart pub and satirised its eccentric patrons – who were

COURTESY OF ROB HANSEN'S FIAWOL.ORG



With best wishes to Lew from:—

Vinc Clarke

Ted Carnell

Portraits of the White Horse.

P. Phillips

C. Duncombe

MORDECAI

OF THE

WHITE

HORSE

Arthur C Clarke

Walter Gillings

Francis Arnold

Peter G Taylor

Marie C Stopes

NORWICH STREET

NIGEL ROWE, COURTESY OF ROB HANSEN'S FIAWOL.ORG

ABOVE LEFT: Lew Mordecai in his heyday. **ABOVE CENTRE:** The presentation card given to Lew on leaving The White Horse. The signature of Marie Stopes can be seen bottom right. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The last fans leave The White Horse, 13 April 1989. LtoR: fan historian Rob Hansen, Owen Whiteoak, Martin Smith (at back), Avedon Carol and Vince Clarke.

'Tuckerised' [7] versions of Clarke's old pals.

This idyll was not destined to last either and, in April 1953, when the White Horse's popular SF-loving landlord Lew Mordecai was reposted to The Globe in nearby Hatton Garden, the 'circle' migrated with him. The occasion was marked by a farewell party during which most present signed a presentation card for him. Curiously, amongst the signatures that of Marie Stopes can be seen bottom right.

Marie Stopes? [8] I wondered what on Earth could have brought this world-famous palæobotanist to the pub that evening. I scoured her biographies and found nothing to indicate that she read SF or had heard of Charles Fort. She did have, however, a 'UFO experience' and a long-running and well-known feud with HG Wells. Though they reluctantly admired each other – he was interested in her social reforms, while she was attracted to his atheism – each openly thought the other was "insufferable". In 1952, at one of the many dinner parties they both attended, she spotted a handsome young man, the painter and anti-Catholic writer Avro Manhattan, a protégé of Wells. Avro was also a member of the British Interplanetary Society; so it is my guess that he was acquainted with some of those older BIS members who were also members of the SF and rocketry groups in earlier years. I'd like to think that Stopes had been invited along that evening at The White Horse by Avro.

As soon as she saw Manhattan, Stopes developed a crush on him, excited by the vigour of his opposition to the established churches – churches for which she still held a grudge for their opposition to her ideas on sex and marriage. She would have been 73 that year but could still enjoy the company of bright young men, and the buzz in The White Horse would have been typically passionate. June Rose, her biographer, writes: "In her heightened state, she was extremely impressionable. Avro… had conveyed his enthusiasm for the subject [spaceflight] to Marie and when, on December 1, 1953, she spotted a blue light in the sky, she was certain it was a flying saucer travelling from Dorking." [9] Marie actually joined the BIS herself in 1954.

Impromptu meetings continued to be held at the White Horse until April 1989, when it finally closed its doors. Quite possibly the very last fannish meet there, of any sort, was on the evening of 13 April, when one of the six attendees was our very own one-time sub-editor Owen Whiteoak. The tradition of weekly Thursday gatherings continued happily at The Globe until it was scheduled for demolition in July 1974.[10]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – For their generous help, my thanks go to the SF fan historians and archivists who went out of their way to preserve the correspondence, images, fanzines and reports of the day. Chief among those are Rob Hansen's **FIAWOL** archive - http://www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/ ; David Langford for his **Ansible** archive - http://news.ansible.co.uk/ ; Greg Pickersgill for his **Gostak** archive - http://www.gostak.demon.co.uk/ ; Peter Weston for permission to use images from Mike Rosenblum in his collection, and for his *Relapse* -http://efanzines.com/Prolapse/; Philip Turner for permission to use images from Harry Turner's **Footnotes to Fandom** archive -http://www.htspweb.co.uk/fandf/romart/het/footnotes.htm; and Jill Godfrey for permission to use Harold Gottliffe's photos from the above sites.

REFERENCES

[1] He's hardly remembered now but WJ Passingham (1897-1957) was a very popular writer of SF serials, many for younger readers, in the weekly magazines of the 1930s, including *The Passing Show;* some were later serialised on radio. He discovered SF fandom in 1938 when he realised he lived near Walter Gillings on the east side of London and promptly joined the SFA. See *SF Encyclopedia* entries 'Passingham, WJ' and 'Passing Show'.

[2] 'Branch Reports' in *Novae Terrae* (Jan 1939) pp15-16: www.fiawol.org.uk/fanstuff/then%20archive/newworlds/NT29.htm#3.NAM

[3] Clarke clarifies this in his autobiographical *By Space Possessed* (1993). The project was, in fact, a "spaceship speedometer" invented by Jack Edwards "the 'mutant genius' of the BIS", what is now called 'inertial guidance'. Clarke wrote: "We had planned to test the gadget on one of the deeper lifts of the London Underground but you will not be surprised to learn, it never got as far as that. The theory of the device was perfectly sound, and something similar steers every satellite into orbit today. But the engineering precision demanded was utterly beyond our means, and Mrs Edwards put her foot down on hearing of our intention to cast lead weights in her best saucepan."

[4] The earliest known Thursday meeting in London took place on 9 Dec 1937, as described by Sid Birchby in *THEN*, vol.1, ch.1 – see also 'Ted Carnell's Day Off' in http://efanzines.com/File770/File770-141.pdf

[5] The diary was excerpted in two instalments by Temple's son-in-law Joe Patrizio in Peter Weston's web-zine Relapse: http://efanzines.com/Prolapse/Relapse16.pdf, pp12-17 (Feb 2010).

[6] J Michael Rosenblum kept his *Futurian War Digest* running throughout WWII, playing a vital role in keeping the fan diaspora in touch. His citation is in vol.1, no.2, Nov 1940.

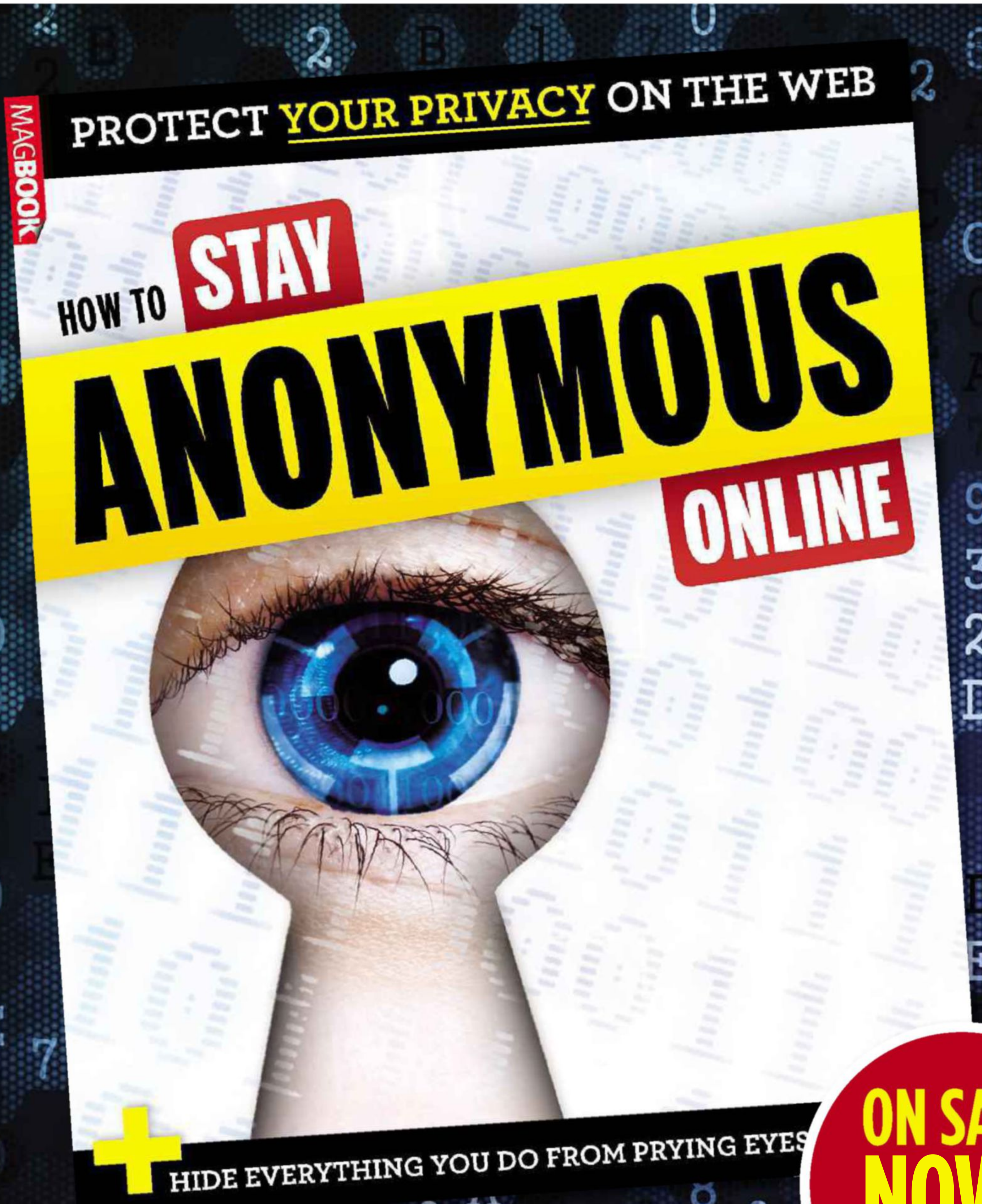
[7] 'Tuckerism' - after US author Wilson Tucker's notoriously fannish habit of modelling his characters on his friends and correspondents. See: *SF Encyclopedia* entry 'Wilson Tucker'.

[8] I can offer an entertaining little Stopes-related fortean titbit. In 1921, a few months after she opened her first birth control clinic in London, the city received a celestial blessing of "innumerable little frogs" during a thunderstorm – see Fort, *Lo!*, ch.1.

[9] June Rose, *Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution* (1992), p241. Also Ruth Hall, *Marie Stopes* (1977) p320.

[10] Since 1974, the litany of pub names has lengthened and the London Circle's migrations can be found in a number of sources, including Dave Langford, 'History of London SF meetings': http://news.ansible.co.uk/london.html#history; and Mark Plummer, 'Paraphernalia: Anniversary Drinks 2': www.strangehorizons.com/2012/20121217/plummer-c.shtml. Plummer observes: "A friend once charted the cross-town and cross-time peregrinations of the group. Regrettably, joining the dots does not reveal some portentous symbol; it just looks like somebody's scribbled on a map of central London." Currently, the meetings are held at the Melton Mowbray, on High Holborn, just around the corner from the site of old The White Horse.

SECRET NEW WAYS
TO STOP THE WEB WATCHING YOU



MAGBOOK

PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY ON THE WEB

HOW TO STAY ANONYMOUS ONLINE

+ HIDE EVERYTHING YOU DO FROM PRYING EYES

ON SALE NOW!

Order your print or digital MagBook at magbooks.com

forum

An American institution in low spirits

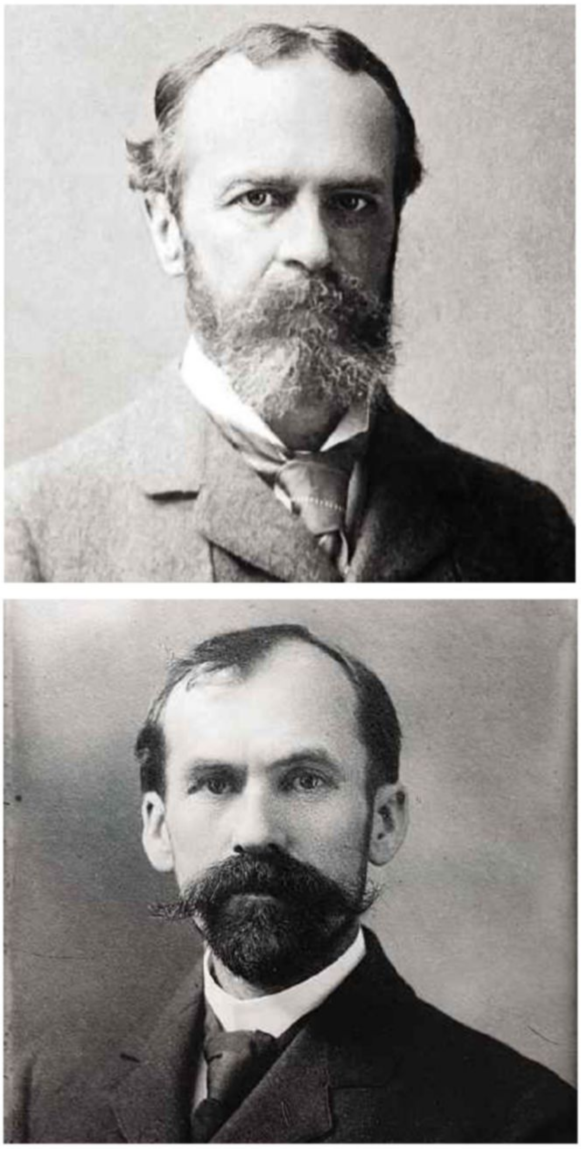
The American Society for Psychical Research has had its share of ups and downs in its 130-year history. A concerned **GUY LYON PLAYFAIR** surveys its history and wonders if there will ever be another up.

GUY LYON PLAYFAIR has been a member of the Society for Psychical Research since 1973 and was elected to its Council in 2004. The author of many books, he investigated the Enfield Poltergeist with Maurice Gross, and recorded the experience in *This House is Haunted* (1980).

The ASPR was founded in 1885, three years after the launch of the (British) Society for Psychical Research (SPR), and for a time cooperation between the two was close, physicist Sir William Barrett having been a prime mover in the founding of both, and the SPR sending its leading investigator Richard Hodgson over to direct research, which he did very ably until his death in 1905.

In the very first volume of its *Proceedings* (1886, p102) the ASPR gave a hint of things to come. A member of the committee on 'mediumistic phenomena' reported that he had been to see a trance medium "whom, at her request, I shall call Mrs P." He had done a thorough job, attending "a dozen" of her sittings and collecting first-hand testimony from 25 sitters, five of them close relatives of his. His conclusion, after considering the possibility of prior knowledge of the sitters or "lucky guesses", was that "I now believe her to be in possession of a power as yet unexplained."

Mrs P was of course Leonora Piper, who was to become one of the most extensively studied mediums of all time, and the reporter was none other than the man now generally acknowledged to be the father of American psychology – William James. His 120-page account of his experiences with her appeared in volume 2 of the *Proceedings* in 1909, the year before his death. Long before then he had famously told the SPR, which had elected him president in 1896, that to disprove the law that all crows are black, you only had to find one white one. "My own white crow," he declared, "is Mrs Piper."

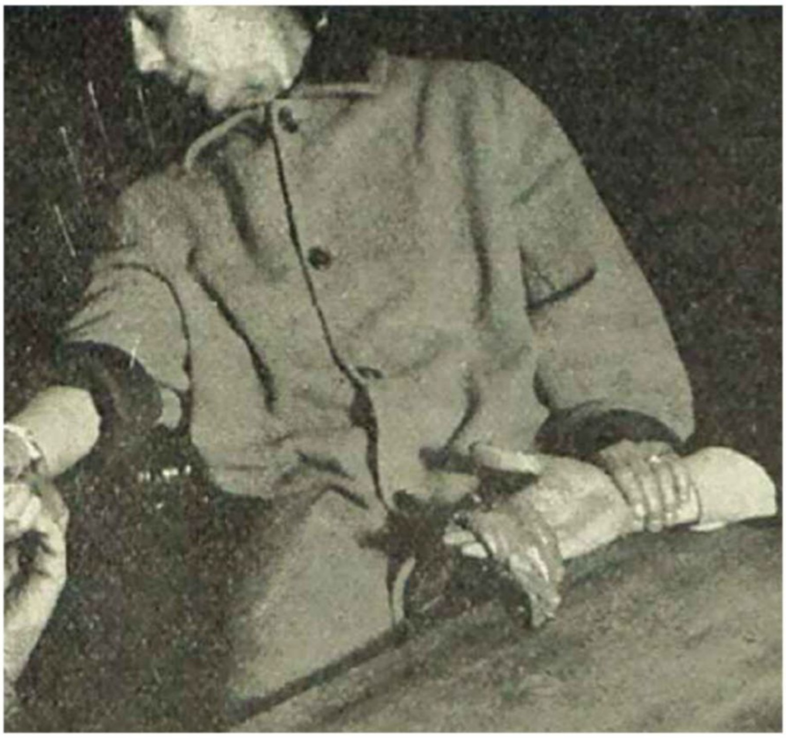


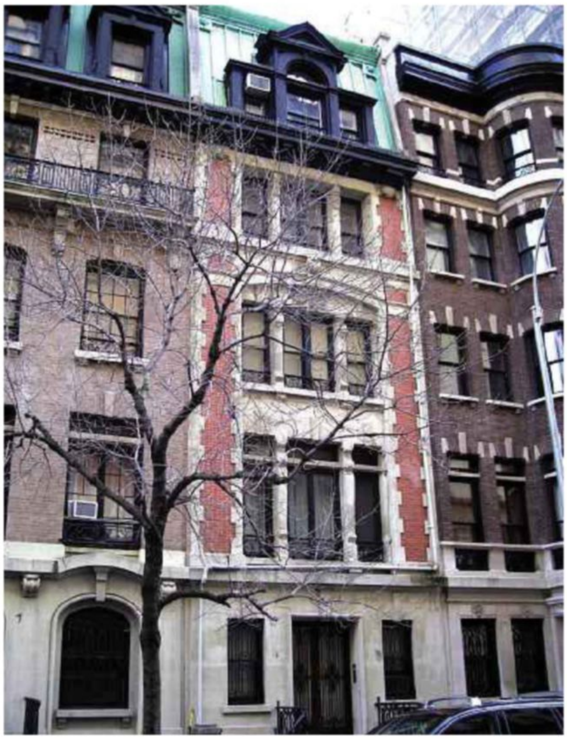
ABOVE: Early luminaries of the ASPR included William James (top) and James Hyslop.

Psychical research in the USA, it seemed, was off to a good start, and despite early administrative upheavals the ASPR has kept going, if at times only just, and its *Journal* and *Proceedings* have published several of the classic studies in psychical research. One of the first was James Hyslop's 470-page study of what has become known as the Thompson-Gifford case [1] (P3, 1909) in which an aspiring artist in his early 40s (Thompson) appeared to have some kind of contact with the deceased artist Robert Swain Gifford, and began to produce work in his style. Another was Walter Franklin Prince's massive study (1,400 pages) of the 'Doris Fischer' case of multiple personality which remains one of the most fully documented works of its kind. [2]

Hyslop ran the ASPR virtually single-handedly up to his death in 1920, when it entered its first 'down' period, largely due to its preoccupation with the highly controversial medium Mina ('Margery') Crandon (see **FT300:50-54**), one member complaining that the *Journal* was "getting to be like a popular occult magazine". This led Prince and other scientifically minded members including Professor William McDougall and Gardner Murphy, a future president of both the ASPR and the American Psychological Association, to found the Boston Society for Psychic (sic) Research, which was in effect the ASPR in exile from 1925 to 1941. During this period it went into book publishing, producing three of the basic texts in psychical research, Prince's *The Case of Patience Worth* (1927), JB Rhine's *Extra Sensory Perception* (1934) and René Warcollier's *Experimental Telepathy* (1938).

As for that "popular occult magazine", while it is true that for some time following Hyslop's death it published very little original research, for the simple reason that the ASPR had not done much other than look into the antics of 'Margery', her supporters and debunkers, it did contain one or two items of considerable historical interest such as Zoe Wassilko-Serecki's account of phenomena she had observed at close range with the Romanian poltergeist victim Eleanore Zugun, [3] and the first English translation of Alexandre Dumas's encounter with the remarkable clairvoyant Alexis Didier. [4] However, by





ABOVE LEFT: An ASPR investigation of 'Margery'. The 'apported' hand rests in that of Eric Dingwall.

ABOVE LEFT: The ASPR's New York headquarters.

the end of the 1930s the ASPR seemed to have forgotten what it was founded to do: carry out original research, write it up, and publish it.

Then, in 1941, there was a dramatic turnaround with the arrival of George Hyslop, son of James Hyslop, who made it clear that things were going to change, as indeed they did. Then began a roughly 55-year 'up' period of original research that transformed the ASPR into one of the world's leading centres of psi research, more than equal in both quantity and quality to its British counterpart.

The more it concentrated on original research, scientific standards and high-quality reporting, the more members and funding it attracted. It not only increased membership from 448 in 1940 to 2,554 in 1972, but also attracted substantial funds, notably from Xerox inventor Chester Carlson, who among many other things helped with the purchase of what is still the society's handsome headquarters at 5 West 73rd Street in New York. He also supported the early research of maverick psychiatrist Ian Stevenson, whose venture into a previously unexplored field led to the first publication, by the ASPR, of his ground-breaking *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (1966).[5]

Under the firm control of George Hyslop and Gardner Murphy, the Society soon attracted the brightest and best of the younger American psi researchers. One of the first was Harvard graduate psychologist Gertrude Schmeidler, whose interest was aroused by a seminar given there in 1942 by Murphy, shortly after which she published her best-known paper, on the 'sheep-goat effect', the first to draw attention to the influence of people's belief systems on their psychic abilities.[6]

For the next 40 years or so the ASPR published a stream of papers on practically all aspects of psychical research, much of it generated in-house by its research director Karlis Osis involving such star performers as Ingo Swann and Alex Tanous. Other highlights included William Roll's first-hand reports of poltergeist cases from Newark, NJ [7] and Miami,[8] a full account of the dream telepathy experiments conducted at the Maimonides dream laboratory in New York by Stanley Krippner, Charles Honorton and Montague Ullman,[9] J Gaither Pratt's unique 10-year testing of Czech clairvoyant Pavel Stepanek,[10] Kenneth Batcheldor's description of his methods of generating psychokinesis in a home circle,[11] and Linda Tarazi's meticulous account of an apparent recall of a past life in the 16th century.[12]

Sadly, the latter proved to be the last major piece of original research to be published by the ASPR. With the retirement of Osis in 1983, in-house activity slowed down and soon ground to a near-halt, or so it appears. For the past 20 years or so, information on the Society's current activities has been hard to come by. My own request for it was not answered or acknowledged.[13] There have been no *Journal* or *Proceedings* since 2004, although the ASPR web site remains, inviting those with personal experiences to report to send them to William Roll (although he died in January 2012). Veteran parapsychologist George Hansen estimated in 2007 after a trawl through the society's tax returns, that membership had fallen from 591 in 1998 to just 23 in 2005. He also noted that its current executive director still enjoys a six-figure salary. His tersely understated conclusion: "It is unclear what services the ASPR actually provides".[14]

That's also what author Stacy Horn may have been wondering when working on her book about Rhine's parapsychology lab at Duke University, described by one reviewer as "immaculately researched". She explains why:

"I repeatedly tried to explore the ASPR archives but I was never granted access. For a year and a half they put me off and I finally accepted that they just didn't want me to see anything. They wouldn't even tell me what they had. I've since learned that I'm just one in a long line of people who had similar experiences with the ASPR. Why?

What a shame it is, because I imagine they house a valuable treasure trove of parapsychology history."[15]

They do indeed – correspondence from William and Henry James, WB Yeats, Upton Sinclair, Conan Doyle and Houdini, more than 10,000 books and publications in 14 languages, some dating back to the 18th century, rare photos, film footage, specimens of automatic writing and doubtless much more. These extensive archives, according to the ASPR web site, "are open by appointment to qualified researchers". Not to all of them, evidently.

After the longest 'down' period in its history, it is beginning to look as if this once fine institution is not only still down, but possibly down and out. **FT**

REFERENCES

J = Journal,
P = Proceedings of the ASPR

1 P3, 1909
2 P9, 10, 1915-16
3 J20 1926
4 J29-30, 1935-6
5 P20, 1966
6 J39, 1943
7 J63 1969
8 J65, 1971
9 J65, 1971, J66, 1972
10 P30, 1973
11 J78, 1984
12 J80, 1990
13 Personal email, 6 May 2014.
14 paranormaltrickster.blogspot.co.uk, 13 Aug 2007.
15 Stacy Horn, *Unbelievable*, HarperCollins, New York, 2009.

Beware Bolívar's bones!

SD TUCKER maintains that the 'cult of Chávez' really is strongly linked to his belief that Marx was on the side of the angels; but whose side was Simón Bolívar on?

SD TUCKER is a Mersyside-based writer and regular contributor to FT, particularly on literary and political forteana, whose books include *Paranormal Merseyside* (Amberly, 2013) *Terror of the Tokoloshe* (CFZ, 2013) and the forthcoming *The Hidden Folk*.

I enjoyed David Hambling's reply to my article about Hugo Chávez (**FT312:42-47**), detailing the *santeria*-like cult of Maria Lionza in Venezuela (**FT317:53**). It certainly picked up on much I didn't mention, and he is obviously correct about Chávez's post-death deification fitting in with the religion very nicely. I would, though, still like to argue that *El Commandante*'s left-wing politics were central to his god-like status with his people.

As the article says, Lionza's cult groups together its largely once-human deities under various 'Courts', including one dealing with politics which is, suggestively, called the 'Revolutionary Court' – revolution not being an idea which the Right, ever since Edmund Burke, have traditionally been too keen on. This Court, as well as including Chávez's hero Simón Bolívar as a member, also contains such noted saints of the Left as Che Guevara. Other Courts also appear to be stuffed with people more likely to be deemed left-wing than right-wing; the 'gangster-saint' Ismael Sánchez, for example, stole from the rich to give to the poor, at least according to legend. You could argue that Chávez did, too; and it is not for nothing that one of the most prominent left-wing campaigns in the West today asks for a 'Robin Hood Tax' upon financial transactions.

This is not to say that the cult is exclusively a left-wing religion (the Vikings, also Lionza deities, were hardly typical *Guardian*-readers) but it does appear as if plenty of the cult's gods were either left-wing during their lifetime, like Guevara, or have since been anachronistically reclaimed as being so by Chávez and his allies. Chávez's political philosophy was dubbed 'Bolívarianism' by him, for instance, largely spuriously. Simón Bolívar may have become a hero by helping eject the Spanish from Latin America, but Chávez disingenuously expanded Bolívar's philosophy of anti-imperialism to also mean combating US economic power through socialist means. Having died in 1830, the Lionza-god Bolívar could self-evidently not have read *Das Kapital*. But this mattered not to Chávez, who exploited his hero's image at every opportunity and, it is alleged, left a chair empty for his ghost during meetings, or even thought he was his reincarnation. Chávez denied all this in public, however, saying such rumours were aimed at making him look "crazy"; he was but a mere "microscopic soldier" next to the "giant" Bolívar, he maintained. Other things that may have made him look "crazy", though, were his reported confession to friends that he was also the reincarnation of Ezequiel Zamora, another romantic 19th-century rebel leader, and the speech he gave to the nation after his failed 1992 coup, in which he announced like a spirit-medium that "Bolívar and I led a *coup d'etat*. Bolívar and I want the country to change." [1]

The doctor José Gregorio Hernández, likewise, head of Maria Lionza's Medical Court, has long been claimed by the Venezuelan Left as being one of their own, on account of his obvious good works treating the poor *pro bono*. His death in 1919 after being struck by a car (whilst delivering medicine to a sick patient, no less) has led to rumours that the fatal vehicle belonged to the son of the right-wing dictator Juan Vicente Gómez Chacón and that, as such, he was some kind of early socialist martyr. In 2008, launching an entirely laudable programme of free health-care for the disabled, Chávez christened the scheme 'Mission José Gregorio', thereby implying, in essence, that the deified doctor would have approved of his health-plan and, presumably, voted for him. As if to confirm that Gregorio was a *chávista*, in 2011 Chávez decreed that 26 October, the day of the doctor's birth, be named 'José Gregorio Day' and claimed that his ultimately fatal cancer, then in remission, had been cured by the deity (if so, then presumably Gregorio eventually withdrew his support...) Over here in Britain, we are often accused of making a god out of Nye Bevan and his NHS; in Venezuela the process has been taken one step further. [2]

Even more suggestive of Chávez's cult having everything to do with his left-wing status, meanwhile, was an amusingly hagiographic children's cartoon shown on the Government-run TV channel ViVe in March 2013. It shows Chávez, drawn in true Hanna-Barbera style, entering a version of Heaven located not amongst the clouds, but amongst the rolling green plains of *El Commandante*'s homeland. Here, to the accompaniment of touching piano music, he meets 10 people who clearly, like him, have been made blessed through their adherence to the principles of revolutionary socialism; people like Salvador Allende, former Marxist President of Chile, the Nicaraguan guerrilla leader Augusto César Sandino, inspiration for the *Sandinista*-movement, and Alí Primera, a socialist protest-singer and Venezuela's answer to Billy Bragg. Interestingly, though, the divine gathering also included two of the main trinity of gods (the so-called *Tres Potencias*) in the Lionza cult – the native Indian leader and scourge of the *conquistadors* Guaicaipuro, and Pedro Camejo, a black soldier who fought under Bolívar's command. Guevara and Bolívar himself were there, too, as was Eva Peron. Is this the beginning of a new Revolutionary Court? [3]

So popular was this cartoon that ViVe have since transformed it into a full series. In one particular episode, Chávez demonstrates clearly how degenerate capitalists will never be allowed to enter Heaven. Whilst sitting around discussing radical politics with Bolívar *et al* on some clouds one day, Chávez cannily spies that Uncle Sam, head of the "Yankee Empire", is sneakily invading Paradise by climbing a rope. Outraged, Chávez calls Sam "the Devil" and "a donkey", says he "smells", and sends him plummeting back down to Earth through exaggerated and unlikely means similar to those so often employed by the Road Runner against Wile E Coyote. Sam's ordeal has

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Hugo Chávez shows off an image of the possible face of Simon Bolivar. The portrait is a digital rendering from genetic data obtained following the exumation of Bolivar's remains in 2010.

not yet ended, however; after being surrounded by an army of zombie-like earth-sprouting hands brandishing placards, Chávez's successor as President, the former bus-driver Nicolás Maduro, comes along and drives by Sam's corpse, the sequence ending with a close-up of Maduro's face painted on the side of his big red vehicle, winking knowingly to the kids at home.[4]

Whilst it includes all classes, the Maria Lionza cult appears to have greatest appeal to the poor, Chávez's old constituency. It is not inherently a left-wing religion, but it appears *El Presidente* was doing his best to recast it as such. As early as 2001, the cult's priests were saying things like "Millions of Spiritualists voted for Chávez, we formed an alliance when he ran for President … Chávez is like a High Spirit made flesh, a liberating spirit." After his 2013 death, there were calls for him to be given a seat on Lionza's Revolutionary Court immediately; whilst actually raised a Catholic, Chávez had so succeeded in associating himself with the cult that rumours he was an acolyte himself were rife. When, in 2004, a statue of Maria Lionza in Caracas cracked in half, it was interpreted by some as being a symbolic early-warning for Chávez about the divisive nature of an upcoming vote on his rule. Is this any wonder when he made public statements like "Cancer? What is that for me? I have faith in the spirits of the plains that I'll prevail … and we will win the elections."[5]

There were rumours that he was a cult acolyte himself

Chávez's success in co-opting the cult for himself was not total, though; one high-profile religious dissenter, for instance, was Simón Bolívar himself. In 2013, one Lionza spirit-medium claimed to have spoken to Bolívar's unhappy ghost, who was annoyed not only that Chávez had falsely claimed to be implementing Marxism in his name, but also that he had exhumed his corpse in 2010 in a delusional attempt to prove he had been poisoned by oligarchs. "This is not what I wanted for my people," 'Bolívar' said. "[Chávez] abused my name and he touched my bones." And, as we all know, the wronged bones of an angry ghost carry a curse; supposedly, just like with Tutankhamen's tomb, several people present at Bolívar's exhumation subsequently fell ill – including Chávez himself, of course. "That glorious skeleton must be Bolívar, for we could feel his spark," Chávez tweeted live from the scene; but did this "spark" later kill him?[6]

I think you could argue that the cults of Maria Lionza and of *chávism* are each syncretic, merging both with one another and, indeed, with Catholicism. In 2011, for example, it was reported that a Venezuelan man carried a large wooden cross in a 310-mile (500km) pilgrimage to Caracas's Presidential Palace, imploring God to cure Chávez's cancer. His name? *José Gregorio* Luque. When Nicolás Maduro gained an audience with Pope Francis in June 2013, meanwhile, he made a specific request that the real Dr José Gregorio – a wannabe priest himself – be canonised because of his work with the poor. Calling him "a saint of the people", Maduro handed the Pope a doll of Gregorio as a souvenir – seemingly, an idol from the Maria Lionza cult. In a March 2013 speech, Maduro even claimed that Chávez had met Christ in Heaven and demanded that Pope Francis be installed in the Vatican, presumably because Francis has leanings towards the radical South American fusion of Christianity and Marxism called 'Liberation Theology'. A left-wing saint anointing a left-wing Pope, who is then requested to anoint yet another left-wing saint; the cycle merely perpetuates itself. As Chávez himself repeatedly declared, "Christ was Communist!"[7] FT

NOTES

[1] www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/07/24/hugo-chavez-obsessed-with_n_658304.html; www.opendemocracy.net/article/hugo-chavez-and-venezuela-a-leader-s-destiny

[2] www.laht.com/article.asp?Articleid=436439&CategoryId=10717; http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/3279

[3] www.patheos.com/blogs/getreligion/2013/03/the-10-people-chavez-meets-in-heaven/

[4] www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nm4BO40Re2E

[5] wwrn.org/articles/8762/ ?&place=south-america; news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/3815145.stm; www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/venezuela/8683051/Hugo-Chavez-seeks-help-from-indigenous-deities-to-beat-cancer.html

[6] www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/03/venezuela-faith-hugo-chavez; www.ft.com/cms/s/2/aa6c327a-8a5f-11e2-9da4-00144feabdco.html#axzz38BuKR9NU; www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/7690928/Simon-Bolivar-died-of-arsenic-poisoning.html

[7] laht.com/article.asp?CategoryId=10717&ArticleId=422012; latino.foxnews.com/latino/news/2013/06/17/in-meeting-with-pope-francis-maduro-calls-for-canonization-venezuelan-doctor/; www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/14/nicolas-maduro-chavez-pope; www.opendemocracy.net/article/hugo-chavez-and-venezuela-a-leader-s-destiny; based on the fact that many people present laughed at Maduro's claims that Chávez had lobbied Jesus about appointing Pope Francis, some sources suggest Maduro only meant this as a joke; others disagree.

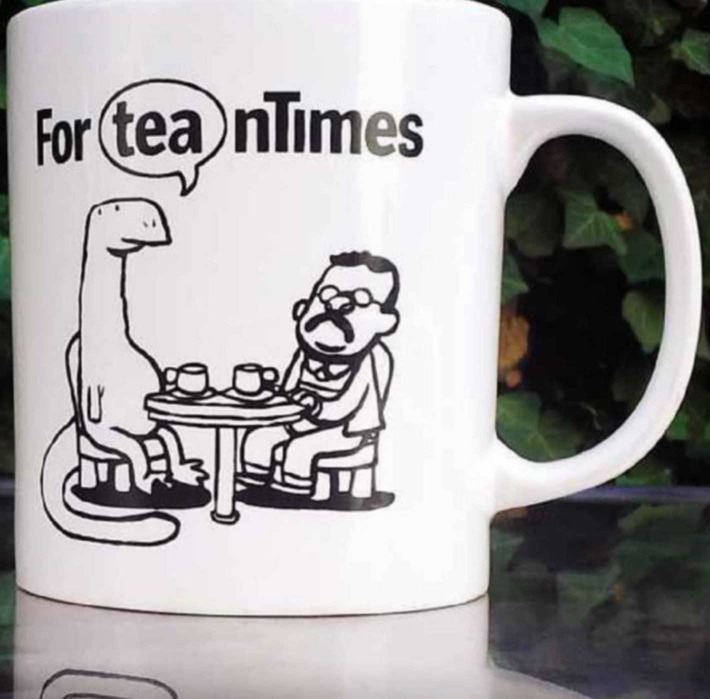
ForteanTimes | **SUBSCRIPTION OFFER**

FREE ForteanTimes EXCLUSIVE MUG

when you subscribe

Your Phenomenal Offer

- Get your first **3 issues for £1** – if you're not completely satisfied, simply cancel during your trial period
- Exclusive **FREE Fortean Times** mug
- **SAVE up to 21%** on the shop price if you continue your subscription
- **FREE delivery to your door** before it hits the shops



SUBSCRIBE TODAY
quoting your offer code below

Call 0844 844 0049
Visit dennismags.co.uk/forteantimes
or complete and return the form below

THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS STORIES
ForteanTimes
THE BALDOON MYSTERY
REAL-LIFE SUPERHEROES

ForteanTimes 3 TRIAL ISSUES ORDER FORM

☐ **YES! Please start my subscription to *Fortean Times* with 3 issues for £1 and send me my Exclusive Fortean Times mug for FREE.** I understand that the first 3 issues of *Fortean Times* I receive are on a no obligation trial basis. If I choose not to continue my subscription I will miss out on updates on the world of strange phenomena. The trial issues and FREE gift are mine to keep, whatever I decide.

☐ OR I am an existing subscriber. Please extend my subscription with this offer.

YOUR DETAILS:

Mr/Mrs/Ms Forename
Surname
Address
Postcode
Telephone
Mobile
Email Year of birth

CHEQUE & CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS: £39.98 FOR 12 ISSUES (SAVE 21%)

1 ☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to Dennis Publishing Ltd.

2 ☐ Please charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Debit/Maestro (issue no. ☐)

CARD NUMBER START DATE EXPIRY DATE

SIGNED TODAY'S DATE

DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT: £19.99 every 6 issues (SAVE 21%) – UK ONLY

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

DIRECT Debit

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To the manager: Bank name
Address
Postcode

Account in the name(s) of

Branch sort code

Bank/Building Society account number

Originator's Identification Number

7	2	4	6	8	0

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society
Please pay Dennis Publishing Ltd. Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Dennis Publishing Ltd. and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)
Date

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account

Dennis Publishing (UK) Ltd uses a layered Privacy Notice, giving you brief details about how we would like to use your personal information. For full details please visit our website **www.dennis.co.uk/privacy/** or call us on **0844 844 0053 or 01795 419 844.** If you have any questions please ask as submitting your details indicates your consent, until you choose otherwise, that we and our partners may contact you about products and services that will be of relevance to you via, direct mail, phone, email and SMS. You can opt-out at ANY time via **www.subsinfo.co.uk** or **privacy@dennis.co.uk** or **0844 844 0053 or 01795 419 844.**

Gifts limited to first 100 orders. Please allow 28 days for delivery. UK only.
This offer is limited to one offer per household

Return this order to: Freepost RLZS-ETGT-BCZR,
Fortean Times, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park,
Sittingbourne ME9 8GU (NO STAMP REQUIRED)

OFFER CODE: P1411P

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF BOOKS TO: BOOK REVIEWS,
FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD, UK.

reviews

The best tunes and best sex

A new biography of Old Nick points out the intellectual contortions theologians underwent while trying to reconcile an evil universal principle with a wholly good God

The Devil

A New Biography

Philip C Almond

I B Taurus 2014

Hb, 270pp, bib, ind, £20.00, ISBN 9781780764030

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £20.00

The Devil has all the best clichés. He also (the Devil has always been male in the Christian tradition) has a literary heritage almost as impressive as God's. Since Daniel Defoe's 1726 *History of the Devil*, books written about, in honour of, or in response to, the Devil are, well, legion. Philip Almond has joined the un-heavenly host with this comprehensive, scholarly and gratifyingly clear exposition of the place of demons in general, and Old Nick in particular, in European thought.

Almond's contribution to the Devil's bibliography is welcome in particular because he makes it clear just how tenuous the Christian theory of evil is, and how much it potentially undermines the power and goodness of God; the commander of all things evil is a dangerous concept for monotheistic religions, complicating the already difficult problem of the existence of evil in a world created by an overwhelmingly good deity.

The Christian position that eventually came to be generally accepted, after several centuries of spiritual agonising and intellectual shape-shifting, is a miracle of theological compromise, and makes Satan a veritable cosmic entrepreneur. Satan and his followers, so the dogma goes, were originally angels ('originally' eventually came to mean before the creation of the world, mainly so as to explain the Fall of Man in terms that didn't damn us all to Hell before we got started). God, in His infinite wisdom, had given the angels the gift of free will, and Satan used this gift to choose a life of evil instead of good.

Initially defeated in an angelic battle with the angels who chose to stay on the straight and narrow, Satan took up the role in which he is most familiar, busily tempting humans into the ways of evil until his final defeat at the end of the world. This story is clearly incommensurate with the idea of a God who is wholly good and omnipotent, but it was the best Christian theologians could come up with in the face of the insurmountable logical and philosophical problems that the existence of an evil universal principle presented. As Almond demonstrates, this dodgy doctrine necessitated all sorts of limitations on Christian thought, including an implicit limitation on the power and goodness of God and Jesus, particularly when it came to redemption. Evil could only have come into existence in the world through the action of God; if the Devil chose evil as a way of life, there must have been such a thing as evil for him to choose in the first place.

My favourite among the theories proposed to ameliorate the demonic paradox is that of Thomas Aquinas, who offered a species of theological Big Bang theory: Satan is created, given free will and chooses evil, all in the first instant of creation, which rather suggests that the poor old Devil didn't have much chance to try the good life before he turned bad. Still, it neatly avoids the thorny problem of why an angel would reject the life of goodness for the road to perdition. Aquinas then undermines the Devil's power by pointing out that we are perfectly capable of choosing evil all by ourselves; a claim that eventually leads to the eclipse of Satan in many sects of Christianity.

> "Demonic sex was regularly reported to be more pleasurable than the mundane human version"

The second major theme of the book is that Satan's history is intimately linked to the history of magic and of miracles. The rise of intellectual interest in magic in the mediæval period is mirrored by the Church's growing obsession with demonology, and its conflation of both notions lays the foundation for a struggle that almost strangles science at birth. Pope John XXII famously set the hounds on the hunt in a letter to the Inquisition in 1320. He was pestered by spirits, and believed that his rivals had used magic to try and assassinate him (one Cardinal was tried for making voodoo dolls of the Pontiff, and condemned to torture, whipping, and burning at the stake).

Sex was never far from the surface of demonic perception. From the biblical/Enochian tradition of angels taking a fancy to the daughters of men onwards, the possibility of sex with demons was to be feared and sometimes desired; particularly when demonic sex was regularly reported to be more pleasurable than the mundane human version. The sexually repressive nature of Christianity gave this stream of demonology an impassioned impetus, just another of the string of paradoxes that marks our relationship with evil, and its personification, over the centuries.

It couldn't last, of course. The rise of science as an empirical pursuit meant the fall of the Devil's star. Not immediately: natural philosophy initially managed a compromise in which the actions of demons were simply part of the natural order, and thus accessible to enquiry, and even experiment. But a broader rejection of the wondrous in favour of the natural exiled the Devil, along with magic and (except for the Catholic Church) miracles, to the margins, the realm of superstitions; thus, as Almond neatly puts it, 'the Devil had lost his modus operandi'. Eventually Benedict de Spinoza could declare (in *God, Man and his Well Being*, 1660) that 'demons cannot possibly exist'. It was all over for Satan, and the Millennium hadn't even begun.

Almond may not have given us anything startlingly original (and this surely won't be the last book on the subject), but his biography of history's most famous and successful bad guy is scholarly, subtle, and readable; God should have such a good biographer.

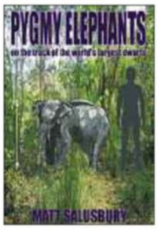
Noel Rooney

Fortean Times Verdict

MAD, BAD AND DANGEROUS (BUT THE SEX IS DAMNED GOOD) **8**

Quite big for pygmies

Unknown animals are not generally as conspicuous as widely photographed but oddly shadowy pygmy elephants



Pygmy Elephants

On the Track of the World's Largest Dwarfs

Matt Salusbury

CFZ Press (Bideford), 2013
Pb, 314 pp, illus, gloss, bib, ind, ISBN 9781909488151

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.50

The Tasmanian wolf or thylacine is often dubbed the world's most common extinct animal on account of the number of unverified sightings since the last confirmed specimen died in 1936. By that reckoning, pygmy elephants must rate not only as the world's largest dwarfs but also as the world's most conspicuous unknown animals, since alleged pygmy elephants have been filmed in the wild close-up and with a clarity unlike the ill-defined blobs normally characteristic of cryptid images. Specimens have been kept in major zoos around the world and preserved in museums after their deaths, yet their zoological status has remained controversial. Faced with such a shadowy, scientifically-anonymous history given such animals' corporeal presence (a history that stretches back over a century in terms of Western knowledge, let alone the countless ages of native knowledge), it is perhaps inevitable that it has taken until the second decade of the 21st century to have an entire book devoted to pygmy elephants. The wait has been worthwhile.

The first four chapters of this fact-fest on pygmy elephants documents the fascinating range of island-endemic prehistoric forms, some of which survived into (semi-)modern times, and the tendency towards dwarfism or gigantism that frequently occurs as a consequence of insular evolution. The proboscidean examples merit a book of their own. Chapter 5 sets the scene for documenting the African pygmy elephant by revealing how taxonomic splitters delineated the African forest elephant from the African savannah elephant. They promoted it to a separate, second African species of elephant in its own right, thus providing a precedent for discovering a 'new' species in the modern scientific age.

Chapters 6–8 are devoted to the African pygmy elephant, documenting its history and recorded specimens. Some researchers have categorised it as a valid species in its own right; others have discounted it as merely a juvenile form or even a dwarfed, teratological version of the forest elephant. (This mirrors the early scientific history of the pygmy hippopotamus relative to the much larger common hippopotamus). Also included here is a detailed account of the West African water elephant, a semi-aquatic cryptid that has long been a favourite of mine.

Chapters 9–10 focus upon the *kallana,* or Asian pygmy elephant, in its permutations and document the bizarre mouse-sized 'water-weevil' elephants – small but supposedly deadly mini-beasts that occasionally turn up in dried form on eBay. The author visited India to interview *kallana* eyewitnesses and obtained photos previously unpublished outside the subcontinent. There is much new information here in addition to the historical literature.

The final chapter considers the likelihood that pygmy elephants exist; the author concludes that they do not. How, then, can the specimens and filmed evidence be explained? To discover how he seeks to resolve this paradox, you'll have to read the book!

There are illustrations throughout the text, many of which were new to me. There is a useful glossary, an illustrated identification guide and a detailed bibliography. But what about websites that were consulted during research and have subsequently vanished? This is a bane for authors in the Internet age, but thanks to an addendum to the bibliography, readers can rediscover these ostensibly lost sources, which is great news.

It's customary to find things to gripe about when reviewing a book, but I found little. One minor source of frustration, however, is that the list of contents does not include page numbers for the chapters, so the only way to find, say, Chapter 6, is to flick through the book. There is the inevitable sprinkling of factual errors that pop up in any work bristling with facts and figures. To quote just one example: it was Maurice Rothschild, not Baron Walter Rothschild, who purchased an anomalous tusk in an Addis Ababa ivory market in the early 20th century.

Overall, however, this is an absorbing read. I do not agree with all of the author's conclusions about the validity or otherwise of pygmy elephants. However, his diligent compilation, presentation and analysis of the hitherto disparate history and facts about these enigmatic animals, plus his own addition of important new data to their archive of material as exclusively revealed in this book, make it a publication very deserving to be read by everyone interested in such creatures. If you're looking for information on stature-challenged pachyderms, this is the publication to consult.

Karl Shuker

Fortean Times Verdict

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VERY SMALL ELEPHANTS **9**

Mass Hysteria in Schools

A Worldwide History Since 1566

Robert E Bartholomew with Bob Rickard

McFarland & Company 2014
Pb/ebook, 236pp, $40.00, ISBN 9780786478880

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £33.50

Mass Hysteria in Schools

This historical meta-analysis provides an invaluable, accessible medical and sociological perspective on what continues to be a very common occurrence: mass hysteria among schoolchildren worldwide. Satanic panics, ghost attacks, demonic possession, alien encounters, suspicious smells, terrorism threats, and infectious diseases are among the interpretations made around these events, documented here as far back as 1566 in Holland.

Covering nearly every continent, most of the case studies are from the past 50 years and, based on historical data and responses, reasonable courses of action are provided to address such behaviours and claims in a way that respectfully acknowledges how real these experiences are to those afflicted by them, eyewitnesses, and interveners.

Sociologist Robert E Bartholomew (Botany College, Auckland, New Zealand), who has written many monographs and articles about mass panics, UFO encounters, and cryptozoology (including alongside Hilary Evans and Benjamin Radford), co-wrote *Mass Hysteria in Schools* with *Fortean Times* co-founder Bob Rickard. They provide a wealth of case studies in ways that illuminate how similar symptoms have been interpreted and treated according to socio-cultural parameters in different locales. Commonly, mass hysteria arises from oppression, anxieties and fears, and it is no surprise that the educational environments in which most of these cases occur conflict with students' needs to express themselves, their cultural and family values, and their time for socialising and play. It has occurred when cultures clash, for example at a modern Australian nursing school in Papua New Guinea (1973) or Christian missionary schools in Tanzania in the 1960s. Many of the most extraordinary (and even chilling) cases come from Malaysia, where Bartholomew himself had spent time as a researcher of culturally specific psychiatric syndromes.

Having summarised their findings in *Fortean Times*'s pages this past summer (**FT316:36–40**), Bartholomew and Rickard bring great depth to this behavioural phenomenon. *Mass Hysteria in Schools* is an engaging and informative read that would be very useful to teachers, school administrators, behavioural scientists, medical doctors, and religious authorities alike in identifying the symptoms and considering a resolution, especially since mass psychogenic illnesses and collective conversion disorders are something that quite literally could arise anywhere at any time. The book's structure – anecdotes and analysis divided into chapters which more or less cover specific geographic regions – make it a thoroughly entertaining book, and while *Fortean Times* readers will be accustomed to jumping between thematic anecdotes, there are moments where some transitional text would have made the narrative flow a bit more smoothly.

It would also have been excellent if the authors had followed up with some of the psychiatrists, scholars, and experiencers from various case studies to gain their retrospective insights on these historical cases; there are moments when student testimonials provide tantalising views into their perspectives that could have been expanded. But those are very minor criticisms considering the great work accomplished by the authors to put together comprehensive summaries derived from journalistic, scholarly, and medical sources.

Many readers will feel inspired to think further on the ideas presented here in relation to other anomalous phenomena and experiences.

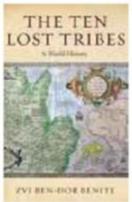
Christopher Laursen

Fortean Times Verdict

A SPLENDID OVERVIEW OF 500 YEARS OF FREAKING OUT **9**

They'll return one day

The tale of the lost tribes of Israel is an odd blend of theology, history and politics – even if you ignore British Israelism



The Ten Lost Tribes

A World History

Zvi Ben-Dor Benite

Oxford University Press, 2013
Pb, notes, illus, bib, ind, 302pp, £19.99, ISBN 9780199324538
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £14.99

For most English-speaking people familiar with the 10 lost tribes, they're inseparable from the belief in British Israelism. In a sentence, this claims that the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel, taken into captivity by the Assyrians c720 BC, travelled north and west and eventually ended up in Britain; so British people today (and by extension Americans) are the true children of Israel – the chosen people. It was a popular belief a century ago at the height of the British Empire; it was the belief of Herbert W Armstrong's 100,000-strong Worldwide Church of God and its hundreds of offshoot Churches today; and it was the belief behind the white supremacist Christian Identity movement in America. (The southern kingdom of Judah, taken into captivity in Babylon around 580 BC, returned home half a century later; their descendants became the Jews, whom British Israelites distinguish carefully from the 10 lost tribes of Israel.) British Israelism (or Anglo Israelism) is a lot more complicated than that, of course. So, in this new academic study, is the whole concept of the 10 lost tribes – and *The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History* devotes only a dozen pages to British Israelism.

Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, a professor of history and middle eastern studies, defines his book as "a history of a nonexistent place… a history of places with meanings charged or transformed by the designation that they were home to a specific group of people".

The important thing about the 10 lost tribes is not where (if anywhere) they ended up, but the idea of them. Their factuality comes a distant second to their influence on oddball ideas; they're a powerful meme. The centuries-long search for them "constituted a history of the world, one based not on what was in it, but on what was supposed to be in it". Not only that, but the 10 lost tribes have an apocalyptic element: they will return to play a crucial part in the End Times – thus adding new layers of complexity. As Benite writes, if they're going to return some day then logically "that means that they are somewhere on earth right now". They are lost, and loss is a crucial theme of his book, a strange and at times wandering compound of theology, geography, history and politics.

Drawing largely on Jewish sources, Benite traces accounts of the 10 lost tribes from 2 Kings in the Bible and the apocryphal book of 2 Esdras through, amongst others, the 12th-century legend of Prester John, to a 17th-century Portuguese Jewish traveller to the Andes, who believed that the native people were Israelites. "Linking the Native Americans with the 10 tribes helped to justify the Spanish conquest of the Americas and its horrors. The conquerors were merely serving as the hand of God," he writes. In 18th-century Britain and North America preachers and politicians used the biblical story of the lost tribes in their rhetoric.

The 10 tribes have been located in Ethiopia, in the Canary Islands, in India, China and Japan. The Mormons have their own idiosyncratic beliefs about them; Benite touches on these before his brief look at British-Israelism, which stemmed partly from the 17th-century vogue for philological analysis of European languages and partly from the prophet Richard Brothers, writing from the "Fisher Mad-House, Islington" in 1796 that some of the English "were members of the twelve tribes of Israel". "By the second half of the nineteenth century," Benite writes, "Anglo-Israelism was a popular 'madness', an 'Anglomania'." Britain's pre-eminent role in the world "could only be explained as the fulfilment of God's blessings". Drawing together the political and the geographic, the myth of the 10 lost tribes became deeply entwined with Zionism, the creation of a homeland for just one tribe. This is certainly not an introductory book on this fascinating centuries-old quest. For a more straightforward exploration of beliefs in where the 10 lost tribes may have gone, you can't beat Tudor Parfitt's *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth* (2002). But for a study on the political significance of the concept of the 10 lost tribes in world history, Benite's book makes an original contribution.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

A TRULY SPELLBINDING HISTORY FOR THE MASSES **8**

To order any of these titles – or any other book in print – contact the
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP
Telephone: 08430600031 Fax: 01326 569555 Email: FT@sparkledirect.co.uk
Address: Fortean Times Bookshop, PO Box 60, Helston TR13 OTP.
We accept all major credit and debit cards including Switch & Amex. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to the FT Bookshop. Delivery is 7–10 days, subject to availability. Postage & packing is free within the UK.

Truth in officialdom

Official records unearthed via FOIA requests are more likely to reveal state incompetence than the existence of fleets of UFOs

David Clarke
BRITAIN'S
X-traordinary
FILES
CLASSIFIED

Britain's X-traordinary Files

David Clarke

Bloomsbury 2014
Pb, 236 pp, illus, notes, ind, £16.99, ISBN 9781472904935
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.00

From a quick glance at the contents list, *Britain's X-traordinary Files* looks like a traditional fortean compendium with a geographical focus on the United Kingdom. It's got chapters on wartime legends, death rays, ghosts, psychic powers, unexplained air crashes, maritime mysteries and, to round things off, the Loch Ness Monster and other British cryptids. But this is a book with a difference. While most fortean researchers would content themselves with old press clippings and other easily accessible sources of information, David Clarke has delved deep into the official records held in the National Archives. The result is a fascinating new perspective on what might otherwise be quite familiar subject matter.

For some people, the phrase "official records" may raise expectations of top level – and probably top secret – policy documents revealing exactly what the government knows and/or believes about every subject under the sun. The reality, as anyone who has worked in the Civil Service could tell you, is often far more prosaic than that. Just because a formerly classified document has been released under the Freedom of Information Act doesn't mean it's going to contain startling new revelations – except perhaps of government incompetence. A case in point is the investigation by Defence Intelligence (possibly a misnomer, in this instance) into the use of psychic remote viewing for international espionage. Underfunded, badly managed and coming hopelessly late in the day – decades after the corresponding Russian and American studies – the whole thing was a farce from beginning to end. Not surprisingly, the exercise failed to obtain any conclusive results.

The remote viewing study – together with a few documented cases where the police made use of psychic detectives – are unusual because they imply some degree of official endorsement of the paranormal. More often than not, however, what appears to be an official interest is merely a reflection of currently popular beliefs. If a member of the public reports a huge beast on the loose on Bodmin Moor, the authorities have a duty to investigate it even if they have no expectation of finding anything. It's inevitable, too, that questions are going to be asked in Parliament about the Loch Ness Monster, simply as a consequence of public interest in the subject. The fact that belief in the monster has a small but positive correlation with the strength of the Scottish economy isn't lost on politicians, either.

UFO references creep into official documents too – not necessarily because the government "knows something", but simply because they're such an ingrained part of popular culture. For example, the notorious spate of Comet airliner crashes in the 1950s coincided with the height of the flying saucer craze. At one public inquiry, the counsel for the Crown suggested that the aircraft "might have come into contact with something like either a flying saucer or a meteorite," and went on to ask what physical evidence could be expected "if, for example, it was shot down by some plane from Mars, or something of that kind."

The openness of the Comet inquiry meant that the truth – which turned out to be mundane – entered the public domain very quickly. In the chronically secretive world of the military, however, things were different. The inquiry into the 1970 crash of an RAF Lightning was held behind closed doors, leaving an information vacuum in which the public could indulge in unfettered speculation. The involvement of a UFO appeared to be confirmed in 1992, when a supposed account of the inquiry was leaked to the press. When the official record was finally released in 2008, however, it turned out to say something completely different. In place of a UFO, there was a typical Cold War counter-Soviet training mission that just happened to go disastrously wrong. So which of the two accounts is the true one? For many people, the answer is obvious. The account that entered the public domain first – and is still far more prominent on the Internet than the later "official" version – must be the correct one.

This brings us to a fundamental problem that a book like this faces. Certain people are always going to believe that anything the government says is a lie. For some reason, this belief often goes hand-in-hand with an interest in paranormal phenomena and unexplained events – exactly the topics covered by this book. It's almost inevitable that conspiracy theorists will end up disappointed, because the book isn't going to give them the "truth" they want to hear. For the rest of us, however, it's a fortean must-read: a well-researched and entertaining insight into the wackier side of British officialdom.

Andrew May

Fortean Times Verdict

A MUST-READ, THOUGH POSSIBLY NOT FOR CONSPIRACY THEORISTS 9

Counter-Tourism

The Handbook

Assembled by Crab Man

Triarchy Press 2012
Pb, 225pp, illus, notes, £17.50, ISBN 9781908009899
AVAILABLE FROM AMAZON

I rarely read a book that changes how I see the world before I reach the last page. The handbook aims to help us to get more from heritage sites, using the tools of tourism but gently, and in some cases not so gently, subverting them. For a time, tourism was seen as a bad thing, and in some cases still is: "We are travellers; they are tourists". Yet tourists make choices about what they want to experience. Dadaism, psychogeography, situationism and Garfinkel's ethnomethodology are all in *Counter-Tourism*'s DNA, specifically in the way it uses disruptive methods to alter how we view heritage.

Some suggestions are straightforward – glimpsing exhibits through the window of a closed museum, or looking at the colours thrown by stained glass rather than staring at the windows themselves. Others require a more outgoing personality: holding services in gift shops to worship the past is not for the shy.

Crab Man also touches on fortean subjects such as the black dog of Bungay, miniature villages and architect Sir Patrick Abercrombie's interest in Feng Shui within town planning.

I read *Counter-Tourism* in Munich, a place I know well. The verdigris ships atop Oberpollinger triggered memories of *Time Bandits* and the Monty Python's Crimson Permanent Assurance Accountancy song as I walked into the department store. I found myself keeping photos of street performers, showing the empty space where giant soap bubbles had just burst. I planned a trip based on missing dog posters, found everywhere from our street in the outskirts to the centre. I put these all down to the inspiration of Crab Man's excellent book.

Steve Toase

Fortean Times Verdict

YOU MAY FIND TRAVEL BROADENS THE MIND AFTER ALL... 8

Sci-fi and fantasy round-up

David V Barrett on a vintage dystopian satire, a pair of novel novellas, the return of an old fave, SF in pictures, an unfunny German comedy and a bio of *Buffy*'s creator

City of Endless Night

Milo M Hastings

Hesperus Press, 2014
Pb, 256pp, £8.99, ISBN 9781843915058
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £8.54

The Mirror

Richard Skinner

Faber & Faber 2014
Pb, 320pp, £14.99, ISBN 9780571305070
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.99

Fool's Assassin

Robin Hobb

HarperVoyager 2014
Hb, 630pp, £20.00, ISBN 9780007444175
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £17.00

Sci-Fi Chronicles

A Visual History of the Galaxy's Greatest Science Fiction

ed. Guy Haley

Aurum Press 2014
Hb, 576pp, £25, ISBN 9781781313596
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £22.50

Apocalypse Next Tuesday

David Safier

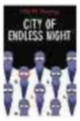
Hesperus Press, 2014
Pb, 288pp, £6.99, ISBN 9781843915072
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £8.54

Joss Whedon

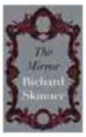
Geek King of the Universe

Amy Pascale

Aurum Press 2014
Hb, 440pp, photos, £20, ISBN 9781845137199
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.00



After a lifetime of reading SF, it's a delight to discover something new from nearly a century ago. *City of Endless Night*, first published in 1919, is a dystopian satire on the militaristic mindset of Germany, set in 2151. The protagonist finds himself trapped in Berlin – a roofed 60-level city of 300 million people, separated from the rest of the world. Soldiers and factory workers are selectively bred for their size, everyone wears a uniform denoting their position in society and there are strict regulations on who can go where and do what. "In all this colossal business there was everywhere the atmosphere of perfect order, perfect system, perfect discipline." American writer Milo M Hastings writes of the "fetish of efficiency which finally completely enslaved the Germans", the people being "a domesticated species... the logical outcome of science applied to human affairs". Written long before Huxley's *Brave New World* or Orwell's *1984*, this is a startlingly powerful novel.



Richard Skinner's *The Mirror* contains two unusual novellas. The title story is set in a convent in Venice in 1511, narrated by a postulant whose life is disrupted when she is asked to model for an artist painting a portrait of the Abbess. There's nothing overtly fantastical or supernatural about the story, but the insight it gives into the mind of a girl separated from the world when confronted by very different and unspiritual worldviews is astonishing.
The other novella, 'The Velvet Gentleman', borrows Hirokazu Koreeda's idea of the dead passing to a way station where they have a week to choose one memory from their life to be filmed, and take with them into the afterlife as their sole memory; Skinner uses this device to explore the often surreal life of composer Erik Satie. Both beautifully written, compelling stories with characters that stay with you long after you've finished reading them.

It's great to see a new novel – and the start of a new trilogy – about Fitz and the Fool, two of my favourite characters from one of my favourite authors, Robin Hobb. Now middle-aged, FitzChivalry Farseer, a royal bastard trained as a spy and assassin since childhood, has been living quietly in the countryside away from politics and intrigue and violent death – but they have a habit of tracking him down. The mysterious Fool was his close friend in childhood and young adulthood; he hasn't seen him for years, but learns that he may be in danger. Much of this novel is about Fitz's complex relationship with his strange young daughter who we realise from early on is not only different but somehow hugely important. Robin Hobb has always been superb at creating characters who are multi-faceted, flawed and truly alive – but I wonder whether she ever wishes she could write as Megan Lindholm again, creating tightly-plotted 200-page novels. very few novels need to be over 600 pages long; *Fool's Assassin* would have been stronger at half the length.

If you're more interested in visual rather than written SF, you'll appreciate *Sci-Fi Chronicles*, an ambitious but sprawling work produced largely by *SFX* magazine writers. Any "encyclopedic guide" that starts with four pages explaining "How to use this book" has problems. The order of its contents is incomprehensible: one page on Robert Heinlein is followed by eight on Batman. Inconsistency is a problem: the page on Cordwainer Smith is headed with that name and refers to his real name Paul Linebarger; the page on John Christopher is headed with his real name Samuel Youd. But niggles aside, this lavishly-illustrated book, full of complex timelines, would be a great present for a teenage SF fan.

Apocalypse Next Tuesday was a German bestseller and is blurbed as being a bundle of laughs. I can only think something's been lost in the translation. Marie is fat, in her mid-30s and has just jilted her fiancé at the altar. Then she meets a carpenter, who turns out to be Jesus back on Earth to fight the last battle, and falls in lust with him. Satan's here as well, looking like either George Clooney or Alicia Keyes. And the Archangel Gabriel, the local parish priest, is having it off with Marie's mother. I couldn't tell if it was supposed to be a light comedy, because it's so ludicrously lightweight, or a dark comedy because of its subject matter (the title's a clue) – or even a closet Christian novel, because Jesus is forever coming out with chunks of undigested biblical quotes. Whatever, funny is the one thing it wasn't. I smiled once, when Marie attempts to say "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" ("My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?") and Jesus tells her she actually said "My God, my God, my llama is infertile" .

Staying with apocalypses but going from the ridiculous to the sublime, one of the best-ever lines in TV SF, succinct but encompassing the whole series, was the epitaph on Buffy's grave: "She saved the world a lot." *Joss Whedon: Geek King of the Universe* is a fascinating biography of the man behind *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Angel*, and *Firefly/Serenity*, and *Dollhouse*, and *The Cabin in the Woods*, and now Marvel's *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* The guy who never really felt part of the gang as a schoolboy has created some of the most amazing TV series of our time, and along the way has nurtured a whole extended family of not just great actors but also writers, directors, producers and showrunners. Joss Whedon is in essence a storyteller; this account of his life, his failures and his amazing successes is highly recommended for all fans of the Whedonverse.

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS, BLU-RAYS AND GAMES TO:
FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD.

Penny Dreadful: Season One

Created by John Logan, US 2014

Paramount, £19.99 (DVD), £24.99 (Blu-ray)

Mina Harker, Victor Frankenstein and Dorian Gray are all characters in the supernatural Victorian melodrama *Penny Dreadful*, a stunning mix of vampires, scientific hubris and decadence.

Ethan Chandler (Josh Hartnett), an American sharp-shooting huckster, is recruited by a well-educated young woman, Vanessa Ives (Eva Green) to use his skills when she visits a nest of vampires behind an opium den, with Sir Malcolm Murray (Timothy Dalton) who is searching for his daughter, Mina Harker (Olivia Llewellyn).

The long title sequence – a minute-and-a-half – warns of what is to come: scorpions, snakes, beetles, bats, spiders, a crucifix, bloody hands and the cutting open of a corpse... This is the demi-monde – "a half world between what we know and what we fear". This is a world, in Sir Malcolm's words, "where science and superstition walk hand-in-hand." He tells Dr Frankenstein (Harry Treadaway) that he is employing him "because you were unafraid to pull back the skin and look beneath".

Looking beneath the skin is what the story does, both literally and symbolically. Whatever monsters the characters encounter, it is their inner demons that the series explores and exposes, at times eviscerating the characters to do so.

To take just one episode, the second, it is packed with exquisite scenes and dialogue, and with touching human frailty. The consumptive Irish prostitute Brona (Billie Piper), coughing, says: "Me lungs are buggered. I'd like to say it was from the dire working conditions of the factory. It's more likely God being a right playful fucker." Later on she sprays the consummately stylish and dissolute Dorian Gray with blood in the throes of passion while being photographed by a pornographer. At what should have been a normal Victorian fake séance, Vanessa is possessed in a long and extraordinarily powerful scene. And towards the end of the episode there is a beautiful scene with confusion and fear turning to child-like wonder as Dr Frankenstein's creation, Proteus, first leaves the laboratory to experience the streets of London.

In spite of the search for Mina, Dr Frankenstein's problems with his creations, the decadence of Dorian Gray and the pathos of Brona's consumption, it is Vanessa who is the heart of this story. She was Mina's close childhood friend, explored poignantly in an almost entirely flashback episode, which also explains the complex and troubled relationship between Vanessa and Mina's father, Sir Malcolm. On the surface Vanessa is cool, collected, confident and competent, but seeing her from the beginning facing down a vampire master and kneeling before a crucifix it's clear there's a lot more going on underneath, and episode by episode *Penny Dreadful* strips away her layers, often horrifically. Human cruelty can be more shocking than the supernatural, as in the brutal treatment of the psychologically-troubled in Victorian times, with Vanessa chained to the wall, a parody of a crucifixion, while hosed down with freezing water.

"Our fare is mayhem and malice with all the ingenious gore we can devise," says the leader of the Grand Guignol theatre, and this is a fair description of one of the darkest and most troubling series you'll ever see on TV. If you can't take gore, or if you're offended by sex scenes, straight or gay, or by female or male nudity, or by swearing (plentiful use of F... and quite a bit of C...), you should give it a miss.

On the plus side, it's not just horrific but beautifully erotic, sensuous and sensual from beginning to end, as well as being shot in Dublin on astonishingly detailed sets.

There's some strange casting, though somehow it all works. Billie Piper shed her clothes and plied her high-class trade in *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*; now she's a more down-market but very knowing prostitute – with a soft Belfast accent. Other surprising choices include Dorian Gray, the epitome of English style with a gentle and fey voice, being played by American singer-songwriter Reeve Carney; rough-and-ready north-eastern character actor Alun Armstrong plays the plummy Grand Guignol theatre leader; and Eva Green, with her impeccable English, is French. There are major actors even in the non-starring roles. Anna Chancellor plays the young Vanessa's mother, David Warner is Professor van Helsing, Simon Russell Beale is an eccentric Egyptologist at the British Museum and Rory Kinnear is Caliban, Dr Frankenstein's vengeful creation.

Creator John Logan's script is beautifully written, with unexpected flashes of humour despite the gore. On cutting open a vampire master, Frankenstein says: "Well, it would appear that you have an Egyptian man of no particular age who, at some point in his indeterminate lifespan, decided to sharpen his teeth, cover himself in hieroglyphics and grow an exoskeleton. Or you have something else altogether." Ethan's response is simply: "Who the fuck are you people?" Ethan is a blunt American without the pretensions of the Victorian English middle-class, and he doesn't take any crap from anyone. Ethan is in many ways the eyes of normality through which the horrors of the story are seen – but even he has his dark centre, hinted at throughout.

There are 11 excellent mini-features on everything from costume to animals to artisanship, via the literary roots of the series and pieces on Victorian prostitution, science and exploration.

Penny Dreadful, I'm glad to say, returns for a second series in 2015.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

GLORIOUSLY GORY AND SEXY VICTORIAN MELODRAMA **9**

Hannibal: Season Two

Created by Bryan Fuller, US 2014

Studiocanal, £19.99 (DVD), £29.99 (Blu-ray)

It's an amusing irony that Dr Lecter himself might appreciate while sipping the finest of wines and enjoying a gourmet meal of long pig: that *Hannibal* airs on the Sky Living channel but involves so much horrible death. Even more gruesome than the first series, Season Two leaves nothing to the imagination; but just in case it has, the characters – mainly Lecter and Hugh Dancy's over-the-borderline autistic criminal profiler Will Graham – discuss the deaths in inordinate detail anyway. In fact, there is a lot of talking in *Hannibal*, as Lecter plays devious and protracted mind games with Will and others under his spell. This is a series in which two highly intelligent protagonists bounce obscure metaphors off each other at considerable length while lounging in Dr Lecter's comfy bespoke furniture. Lecter views Will as a worthy intellect and a visionary in his philosophy of life and death – at once beautiful and ugly, precious and terminal – and its attempts to encapsulate what it is to be human. If you can stay the distance of Will's sanitarium incarceration and a talk-heavy run of middle episodes, your patience is rewarded with some disgustingly graphic demises along the way, and a tourniquet twist or three at the blood-drenched season end.

You'd think that it would be hard to conceive of Lecter on screen as anyone but Anthony Hopkins, or perhaps Brian Cox, but it's a measure of Mads Mikkelsen's ability as an actor that he makes the role of the infamous Hannibal the Cannibal entirely his own. Lecter is written as a Renaissance man with artistic erudition and murderous skill sets as extensive and refined as his palate, and Mikkelsen's portrayal is spellbinding as he convincingly turns from dinner host charmer to stone cold killer in an instant.

The season opener is a narrative master stroke: a flash-forward months hence depicting a fight to the death in Lecter's to-die-for kitchen between the culinarian psychiatrist and Laurence Fishburne's FBI Head of Behavioural Sciences, Special Agent Jack Crawford. It's an encounter that remains tantalisingly unresolved, only played out at the season closer. Along the way, Eddie Izzard's family-killing Dr Abel Gideon reappears, still flattering to deceive as the Chesapeake Ripper, a misapprehension Lecter's ego cannot abide. Lara Jean Chorostecki's Freddie Lounds is back, with her extraordinary red tumble of Pre-Raphaelite hair, as is Gillian Anderson's super-repressed Dr Bedalia Du Maurier. The entrance of Mason Verger and his obsession with man-eating pigs and his sister plays a pivotal role in proceedings, involving some of the most hideously graphic horror scenes of human mutilation to air on network TV. After two seasons set largely in the confines of Lecter's kitchen and

THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth REVEREND PETER LAWS dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com; @revpeterlaws)

It's a British horror jamboree this month, with a slew of HD catalogue releases from Network at £9.99 each on Blu-ray. *Countess Dracula* and *Twins of Evil* see Hammer raising the blood and cleavage levels with varying success. *Countess*, starring Ingrid Pitt, is an enjoyable enough take on the world's most prolific serial killer, Elizabeth Bathory, but it's *Twins* that really stands out. Here, two sisters are enticed by Devil-worshipping libertine Count Karnstein, while their witch-hunting uncle spouts scripture and burns women alive. Peter Cushing's performance as the uncle is one of his best and most poignant, physically etched with the real-life grief and anger he felt at the recent loss of his beloved wife Helen. *Hands of the Ripper*, also from Hammer, has the Ripper's daughter so traumatised by her father's actions that she's condemned to repeat them. Wether it's dad/daughter possession at work or Freudian psychopathology is never fully clear, but the journey is sumptuous and thought-provoking. (Oh, and if you've ever wanted to see Nurse Gladys from *Open All Hours* get stabbed through the hand and in the eye with needles, your bizarrely specific search is over.)

With its new wave pop performances, the anthology horror *The Monster Club* was the 'trendiest' British horror of 1981. Which ironically makes it the most dated; at times, squirm-inducingly so. John Carradine seems confused and rather annoyed to be involved, while Vincent Price (God love him) has a blast, spouting monster lore as it were Shakespeare: "If a Werewolf and a Ghoul have a baby, it's called a Were-Goo". Finally, we know!

Far more subtle but disturbing is *The Shout*, a strange 1970s thriller in which Alan Bates can kill simply by opening his mouth. There's a slow-burn art-house vibe which won't be to everyone's tastes, but patient viewers will find a film that creeps up on them; it's weird that seeing Susannah York simply crossing a room might just give you nightmares. There's more PK shenanigans in the criminally underappreciated *The Medusa Touch,* in which Richard Burton creates catastrophe just by thinking it. Dismissed by many critics as ridiculous and silly, to me it's the perfect Seventies blend of disaster movie and supernatural horror, and is one of my personal faves. Superb score too.

Almost like a glorious HD document of London itself, *The Man Who Haunted Himself* has Roger Moore rushing around the city exasperated with people who keep saying they 'just saw him'. It's a creepy, Twilight Zoney concept that manages to stay fresh even at feature length. Network have also released a little known *Les Diaboliques*-style 1960s chiller called *Catacombs*. It's not as scary as the French classic, but the characters are well drawn and the dialogue features some hilariously outdated advice: "Men like bigger chests... and after all, it's their world".

A round of applause, then, for Network, for consistently reminding us that the UK is such a bubbling pot of creativity.

Fortean Times Verdict

A FISTFUL OF BRITISH HORROR CLASSICS NEW TO BLU-RAY **8**

practice room, it will be interesting to see what Season Three delivers, the arc of Thomas Harris's novels notwithstanding. The whole gory business has an air of surreality about it, enhanced by Will's recurring nightmares and a succession of elaborately staged deaths. In the midst of all this Grand Guignol hokum, watching Mikkelsen's mesmerising turn continues to compel.

Nick Cirkovic

Fortean Times Verdict
AN UTTERLY DE-LECTER-BLE IF NIGHTMARISHLY GORY FEAST **9**

Luna

Dir Dave McKean, UK 2014
On UK release

Luna, the new film from British illustrator, comic book artist and *MirrorMask* director Dave McKean, follows Grant (Ben Daniels) and Christine (Dervla Kirwan) as they struggle to come to terms with the death of their child. Escaping from their arduous daily lives, they take a trip to visit an old friend (Michael Maloney) who is living in an isolated house by the sea with his younger girlfriend (Stephanie Leonidas). Over the course of a weekend, their loss is revisited, old wounds are opened, and secrets are revealed in McKean's hybrid world of realism, origami crabs, sub-Saharan beats and Moon men.

Having seen the trailer for this little feature, my expectations were relatively high; its mix of animation and reality has previously been used to great effect (*Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, *Kill Bill*, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1*), and who doesn't love an oud or two? Sadly, though, the finished product doesn't quite add up to the sum of its parts. After a wonderfully creative opening sequence, we're brought back down to earth with the two middle-class couples in the real world, talking about real problems in an irritatingly superior way. Now, there's nothing wrong with the middle-classes, and as human beings, we all face trials and experience tribulations. But there's something so unbearably condescending about the way this scenario is presented that, I'd argue, makes it very hard for your average, not-so-eloquent viewer to care about theses people's lives, no matter how tragic their situation. It's also hard to believe that all of mankind's problems can be solved by spending a couple of nights talking them through under the luna-light.

On the plus side, the cast is solid, the Arabic music, completely incongrous in the Devon landscape, is a treat for the ears, and the animated intro and many of the imaginary sequences are a feast for the eyes. It's just a shame the film's ambition is limited to a niche audience made up of mostly McKean admirers.

Fohnjang Ghebdinga

Fortean Times Verdict
ONE FOR MCKEAN FANS AND THE CHATTERING CLASSES **5**

Wolf Creek 2

Dir Geg McLean, Australia 2014
Entertainment One, £9.99 (DVD), £12.99 (Blu-ray)

Wolf Creek 2 is an entertaining, if wholly unnecessary, sequel to 2005's outback-set Aussie horror, treading the same ground as the original an inexplicable near-decade later. Kicking off, again, with the generic "based upon true events" tag, the film details the disturbing fates of more unlucky backpackers at the hands of psychotic pig-hunting serial killer Mick Taylor (John Jarratt) – a funny/terrifying portrait of bigoted, posturing Australian masculinity that plays like a character Barry Humphries might have created in a particularly nihilistic mood. Particularly memorable is a scene in which the Pom-hating loon subjects one victim to an Australian history quiz in which wrong answers result in lost fingers.

The film is essentially a cat-and-mouse chase across the remote Australian bush, and it succeeds particularly well in investing these vast lonely spaces with a horrible sense of relentless, pursuing doom more often associated with claustrophobic interiors. To my mind, it's scarier and more fun than its predecessor, winding up the tension of its simple premise to good effect and getting better performances from its young actors. It's also – be warned – very gruesome, and the juxtaposition of a mass kangaroo traffic accident with The Tokens' *The Lion Sleeps Tonight* struck me as pretty tasteless; which may, in turn, strike you as a strange complaint about a film like this...

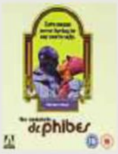
David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict
SURPRISNGLY ENTERTAINING AUSSIE GOREFEST **8**

SHORTS

THE COMPLETE DR PHIBES

Arrow Video, £24.99 (Blu-ray)



Network (see The Rev's Review) haven't cornered the market on British horror this month; for a full-on shot of home-grown horror quirkiness, don't forget Arrow Video's release of *The Abominable Dr Phibes/ Dr Phibes Rises Again*, a double bill that offers an inspired splash of art-deco horror and crime thriller combined. These films constitute the lounge music grandaddy of movies like *Saw* and *Seven*, but they have a lot more charm. **Rev PL** **8/10**

THE BURBS

Arrow Video, £19.99 (Blu-ray)

Joe Dante's genre-bending family movie has Tom Hanks and his neighbours twitching their curtains at the mysterious Klopecks, who dig graves in their garden and flash strange lights at odd hours. Are they crazed killers or is the house the gateway to hell? As in *Explorers* before it, Dante's final explanation never quite lives up to the wonderful mystery that precedes it; but no matter. It's still brilliantly inventive and laugh-out-loud funny, like when Rick Ducommon assumes that Devil worshippers chant: "Satan is good. Satan is our pal." Plus, any family movie that references Michael Winner's *The Sentinel* and features a demonology book by Roger Karswell gets an automatic pass from me. **Rev PL** **7/10**

MINDSCAPE

Studiocanal, £9.99 (DVD)

Mindscape is that rare thing among psychological thrillers: a film with a well-wrought plot that avoids unravelling in its final third and keeps you watching all the way to a satisfying twist. The opening credits contain explanatory footage of remote viewing in the 1970s before we move on to a near future in which Mark Strong's RV detective John Washington is able to enter the memories of his subjects and root out the truth behind their inner demons. In this case, his job is to determine whether Taissa Farmiga's Anna Green is hiding a devastating trauma or sociopathic misdeeds. Strong still seems to be battling to unshackle himself from the rather hard, cold screen presence of previous roles, but his performance as the troubled detective suits the atmosphere of this somewhat gnomic, noir-like outing. Also known as Anna, this US/Spanish thriller is the debut feature of Spanish film maker Jorge Dorado and an impressive one at that. **NC** **7/10**

AFFLICTED

Momentum Pictures, £9.99 (DVD)

Another found footage horror movie about the ill-advised travels of back-packing idiots, *Afflicted* sees two best friends set out from the New World to the Old in search of adventure. When one of them picks up a mysterous illness, and super strength, the trip starts to go horribly wrong. As with too many examples of the genre, the home video style feels like an excuse for the lack of a decent script or proper dramaturgy. It does, though, offer a modern twist on a staple of traditional horror. **DS** **5/10**

New Generation Publishing

New Generation Publishing is the UK's leading self-publishing house, providing author services for both aspiring and established writers throughout the world.

New Generation provides the professional production, sales and marketing services a writer would expect to receive from a traditional publishing house.

The only company to offer: Sales Service, Guaranteed Bookstore Presence, Library e-Lending, Editing, e-Book Publishing, Paperback & Hardback Publishing, Advertising, and Free Marketing Advice all under one roof.

Call or email us today to discuss your publishing and marketing options.

01234 711956 | info@newgeneration-publishing.com | www.newgeneration-publishing.com

INVESTORS WANTED

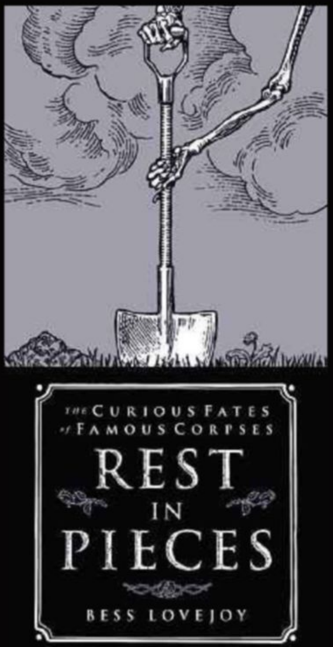
JOIN OUR GROWING LIST OF INVESTORS IN SINGLE TURBINES

1 RENEWABLES LTD
a local wind-power company, seeks investors for renewables projects secured by the UK Government Feed-in Tariff.
Minimum amount 5k, no maximum amount.
Excellent returns for 20 year FiT programme, or for shorter periods if preferred. Corporate and personal guarantees provided.

CONTACT
Ian on 07713 912473 • ian@1renewables.com
or alastair@1renewables.com

Use our website enquiry form at: www.1renewables/get-in-touch.php

The Perfect Halloween and Christmas Gift
Tombstone shaped hardback - £15.00



Follow the adventures of the remains of famous thinkers, scientists, writers, politicians, and religious figures including Einstein, Poe, Bin Laden, Rapustin, Thomas Beckett, Bentham, Rasputin and Hitler

Available from Waterstones, Blackwells, Amazon and independent bookshops

Skendleby
Nick BROWN

Beneath the rolling Cheshire countryside dotted with the mansions of the rich and famous something buried for Millenia is beginning to stir.

Skendleby a Christmas haunting by Nick Brown author of Luck Bringer

" Gripping and genuinely creepy, it's an autumnal must-read." ***New Edition Magazine: Skendleby***

First in the "Ancient Gramarye" series

Follow Nick Brown on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/NickBrownAuthor

Telephone: 07806 330119

Skendleby
Nick BROWN

ISBN 978-1-910053-20-1 available from Amazon and Waterstones and quality booksellers.

www.nickbrownbooks.com

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA
ForteanTimes

LOOKING TO BE PUBLISHED?

SUBMISSIONS AND SAMPLES WELCOMED.
ALL WORK CONSIDERED,
NO AGENT REQUIRED.

AUSTIN MACAULEY
PUBLISHERS LTD

CGC-33-01, 25 Canada Square
Canary Wharf, London, E14 5LQ
Tel: 0207 038 8212
www.austinmacauley.com
mail@austinmacauley.com

Experimentelle Fliegende Untertassen Korps
www.smdeeming.co.uk

Join the UFO forum
will you be ready?

HISTORY THROUGH COINS

Home study photography courses with a stand-alone course on coin photography and their history. A must for new coin collectors

Support whilst you learn

Course material supplied on CD, USB or as download

Coins available for purchase

www.PhotographyCourseSelect.co.uk

AUTHORS

PLEASE SUBMIT:
synopsis, plus sample chapters (3) for consideration.

Olympia Publishers

www.olympiapublishers.com

60 Cannon Street, LONDON, EC4N 6NP

WOLFCHILDE.COM

FREE CONCEPT ALBUM

SWORDS IN ABUSERS

FREE eBOOK

on abuse cover ups.

Super affordable fold out postcard of the Patterson-Gimlin film site as it was pictured from 1968 to 2012.

THE PATTERSON-GIMLIN FILMSITE: 1968 TO 2012

Limited supply. Printed on super heavy stock: 100#. Limit TWO per customer. Payment to perez952@sbcglobal.net. Order only through PayPal. $4.95 each, postage included. Ships anywhere in the world.

UFOs

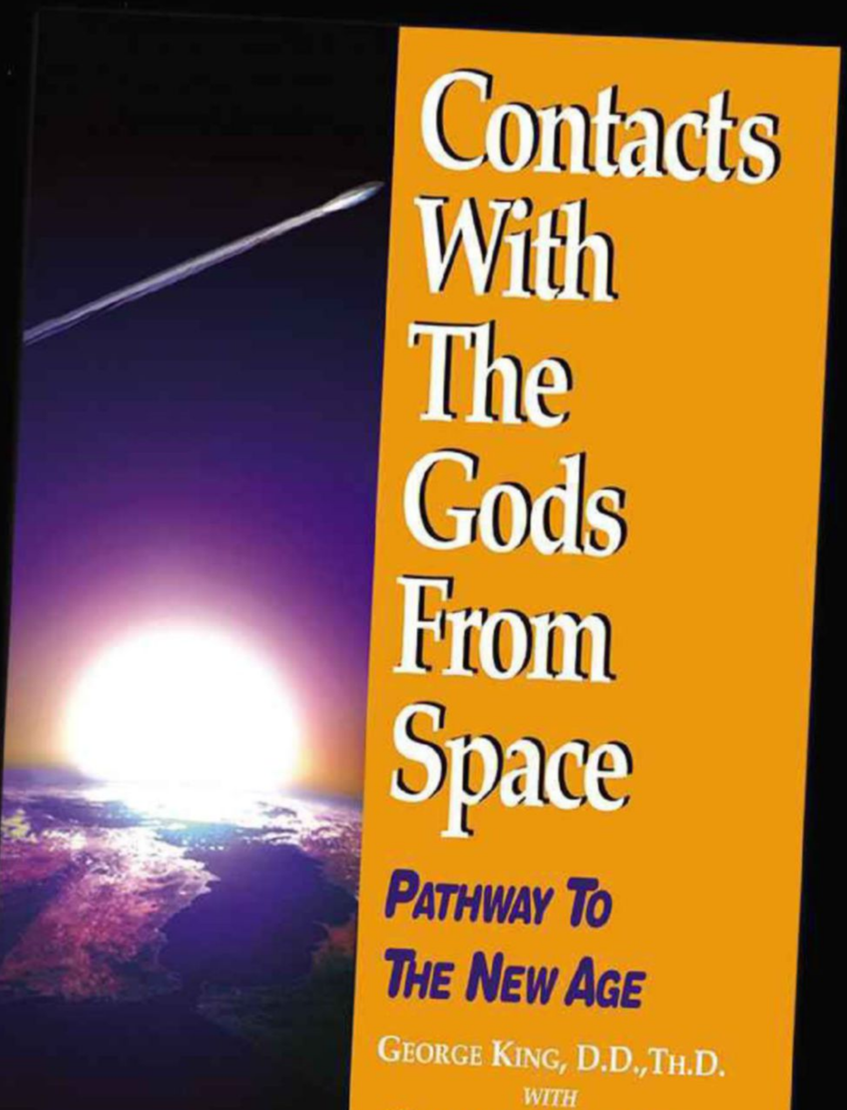
THEIR COSMIC MESSAGE

channelling beings from other planets • the secret history of mankind • the mother earth • spiritual energy • karma and reincarnation • the great change

Contacts with the Gods from Space
by Dr George King with Richard Lawrence

order your copy
£9.99 + p&p

www.aetherius.org

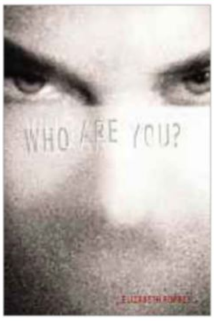

Contacts With The Gods From Space
PATHWAY TO THE NEW AGE
GEORGE KING, D.D., TH.D.
WITH
RICHARD LAWRENCE, TH.D.

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA
ForteanTimes
ANTONY & CLEOPATRA
ROMEO & JULIET
JULIUS CEASAR
HAMLET
VENUS & ADONIS & THE RAPE OF LUCRECE
MACBETH
OTHELLO
KING RICHARD II
NIGHT'S DREAM
NIGHT

LOVES GOOD BOOKS

BOOKS ARE A JOY!

Share with your friends and loved ones, introduce people to your favourite books, show them the covers and illustrations and tell them why you love them – but don't give away the ending!



Cutting
Edge
Press

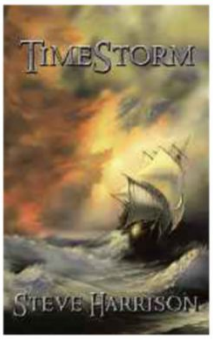
WHO ARE YOU?

– ELIZABETH FORBES

Endorsed by Jake Wood, this excellently researched new book by Elizabeth Forbes explores the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder on a soldier who has returned from Afghanistan and his family. While it is clear to his wife Juliet that Alex is suffering from PTSD, he refuses to seek help through a misplaced sense of pride. The consequences of this are shattering as Alex rapidly comes to be a serious threat to the safety of his family. This is an intelligent look at one possible outcome of leaving PTSD unchecked, and a gripping, harrowing read to boot.

Who Are You? is available from all good bookshops and can be ordered online from Amazon and other e-tailers.

Cutting Edge Press | ISBN 9781908122735
Paperback, 320 pages
£7.99



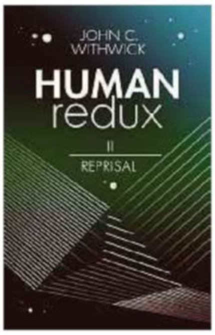
TIMESTORM

– STEVE HARRISON

In 1795 a convict ship, sailing from England to Australia, encounters a strange and savage storm. Miraculously, the battered ship survives and limps into Sydney Harbour, where the convicts rebel, overpower their guards and escape. While the crew attempts to track down and kill or recapture the escapees, seething resentments among the convicts fuel an appetite for brutal revenge against their former captors. But this ruthless life or death struggle is played out amidst the terrifyingly unfamiliar technology and unfathomable culture of a modern-day city, because these desperate men from the 18th century have arrived in Sydney in 2017.

Fortean Times readers can get the paperback for only £8.99 (RRP £9.99) with free p&p (UK mainland only). Go to our website to order at http://bit.ly/Elsewhen-Fortean

Elsewhen Press
ISBN 9781908168443 | 368 pages | £9.99
ISBN 9781908168542 | eBook edition | £2.99



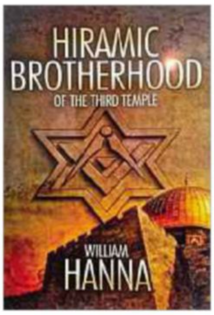
HUMANREDUX REPRISAL

– JOHN C. WITHWICK

"This isn't science fiction, it's science faction."
MERIDIAN RADIO LONDON
HUMANredux: REPRISAL is the second novel in the HUMANredux series. This is not your usual generic apocalyptic alien invasion novel. Instead it weaves elements of time-travel, the esoteric, ancient alien theory, real historical fact, Earth mysteries and good old fashioned sci-fi fun into a compelling and startling narrative. The third novel in the series, HUMANredux: ILLUMINATION will be available 14th December 2014.

Win one of three hour long sessions with the author on self-publishing and the merits an pitfalls. Email JohnCWithwick@outlook.com with proof of purchase.

Self Published by Author.
Exclusive to Amazon Kindle | £1.99 (Approx)



HIRAMIC BROTHERHOOD

– WILLIAM HANNA

Kirkus Review September 2014
"...characters talk about the Illuminati and the Freemasons, and there are tantalizing feints at a thriller-style plot... He takes his readers through two world wars and many other national disruptions. But the book's main emphasis is on facts, not fiction: Hanna is intent on laying out a case against Israel, against the powerful special interest lobby called the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and against a media which is 'serving the interests of the Anglo-Zionist Political Corporate Military Industrial Empire'."

Spiffing Covers | ISBN 978-1909425910
Paperback, 504 pages
£10.87

Dear FT...

letters

On trains in tunnels

Regarding trains remaining in tunnels, passengers included [**FT318:73**]: In 1954, the *Goon Show* episode "The Last Tram (From Clapham)" on the wireless featured a tram that remained after the 1952 shut-down.

Seagoon: Yes, it was very dark. Luckily I had remembered a 200-foot candle I had in my trouser pocket. Putting in a fresh battery I lit it, and there in the candlelight gleaming in the darkness was the hulk of a long forgotten tram. On the side I could see the number 33. Carefully I climbed aboard the rusty platform.

Crun: You can't get on here, it's not a request stop.

Seagoon: Good Heavens! Good Heavens, driver Henry Crun!

Peter Olausson
Gothenburg, Sweden

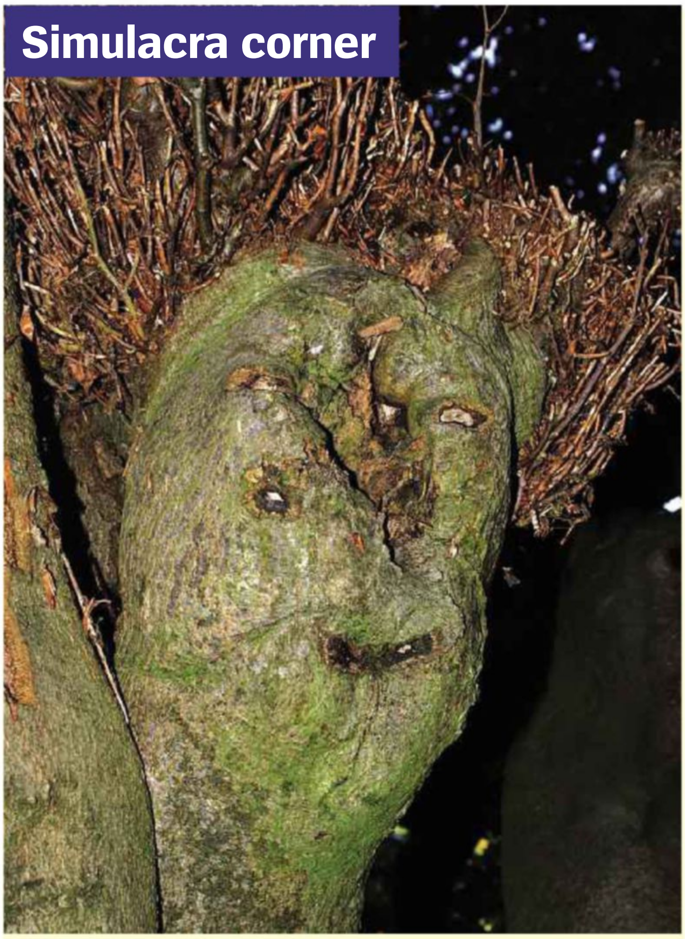
Deafening

In Strange Deaths [**FT315:80**] you report that French TGV trains have hit, respectively, a cyclist and a minivan without the drivers noticing. TGV trains are fast, but they obey the laws of physics. Let us grant – just – that the train might hit a person or even a car without suffering structural damage. The shock must still have been felt throughout the first carriage, and the bang must have been deafening.

I once saw a cat being hit by a car, which wasn't even going very fast. You wouldn't believe the tremendous noise the soft furry animal made on impact – it sounded like someone hit a barn with a sledgehammer. (It died, in case you wondered.) Hitting a cyclist at 200mph wouldn't exactly be a silent affair either. The SNCF spokesman claiming that "the kinetic energy of a train is so great that a shunt (?) could go unnoticed" doesn't sound very convincing. Try driving over a speed bump at 60mph and see if the higher kinetic energy of the car makes the bump less noticeable.

Nils Erik Grande
Oslo, Norway

Simulacra corner



Doug Strachan captured this jovial guy in the Blaen Bran Woodland in Cwmbran, South Wales.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to sieveking@forteantimes.com – and please tell us your postal address.

Pyramids on Mars

In his excellent article on *Doctor Who*, "Forteana in Time and Space" [**FT318:34-39**], Paul Cornell asks whether the fourth Doctor's story "The Pyramids of Mars" is the first time those structures and the red planet have been linked. Well – the 1950s BBC radio series *Journey Into Space* got there at least 20 years earlier. In the second of the trilogy of stories, "The Red Planet", the Martians and their conditioned human slaves are found to be living in large pyramid structures in the Martian canals. This was originally broadcast in 1954... so over to someone else to find the story even earlier that Charles Chilton's Sci Fi epic.

Chris Browning
Todmorden, West Yorkshire

Two much earlier examples of a link between pyramids and Mars come at once to mind: Stanley G Weinbaum's *A Martian Odyssey* (1934) and Eando Binder's *Via Etherline* (1937, first published as by "Gordon A. Giles"). In the Weinbaum story, an Earthman who crash-landed on Mars makes friends with a native, and in the course of their wanderings they encounter (among other strange things) a sequence of small pyramids, which become larger and newer as they progress, until they encounter the Martian creature still occupied in creating them. In the Binder story, explorers find on Mars some very Egyptian-looking pyramids (and, in various sequels to the original story, find more of the same on other planets and asteroids throughout the Solar System).

In *Edison's Conquest of Mars* (1898) by Garrett P Serviss, it is revealed that the Martians, during an earlier excursion to Earth, were responsible for building the Egyptian pyramids and the Sphinx – the latter in fact being a statue of the Martian leader. However, I don't think Serviss's Martians had any pyramids cluttering up their *own* planet.

Dennis Lien
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Abode of mysteries

Andrew May's Forum article "Dark matter versus dinosaurs" [**FT318:55**] reminded me of my reaction when I first heard about dark matter. If all the known Universe – everything from the tiniest subatomic particles to giant black holes – is contained in the knowable 20 per cent, then the unknowable 80 per cent is easily enough for all ghosties, ghoulies and three legged beasties that anyone ever did see.

Jon Dewart
Newcastle

Editor's note: According to the Planck mission team, and based on the standard model of cosmology, on a mass-energy equivalence basis, the observable Universe contains 26.8 per cent dark matter, 68.3 per cent dark energy (for a total of 95.1 per cent) and 4.9 per cent ordinary matter – so the unperceived proportion of the Universe is even larger than Andrew May suggested.

letters

Wrath of the goddess

Although West Hogan's "yin-yang" stone [**FT318:74**] is quite beautiful, I would caution him to return it to Hawaii as soon as possible before he becomes another victim of "Pele's curse". The goddess is quite jealous of those who remove pieces of herself to another part of the world.

Barbara Ashton
Astoria, New York

Cauls

Re the article about children's cauls [**FT318:25**]: my grandmother's adopted brother was aboard a ship that was torpedoed and sunk in the Dardanelles in World War I. He was in the water for three days before being rescued and eventually shipped home. Of course, the family knew only that the ship had gone down, but my great grandmother insisted that he would not have drowned as he was born with the caul over his head. In this case the 'legend' certainly proved true!

Pamela Thornton
By email

The author HE Bates was born with a caul, as he recounts in his autobiography *The Vanished World*, going on to say: "Various superstitions have from earliest times been attached to this caul... among them being that a child so adorned is exceptionally blessed and gifted, that the caul itself is a sign of good luck and, when preserved, an infallible protection against drowning. For these reasons it was often sold by midwives, more especially to sailors. Indeed I am assured that cauls are still sold by hospital porters in seaports." Since this book was first published in 1969, the sale of cauls may have survived after World War II.

A friend of my mother's was born with a caul in the 1930s, which the midwife preserved in brown paper. Apparently, this lady has indeed been lucky all her life.

Albert Ravey
Ramsey, Isle of Man

Man monkey tales

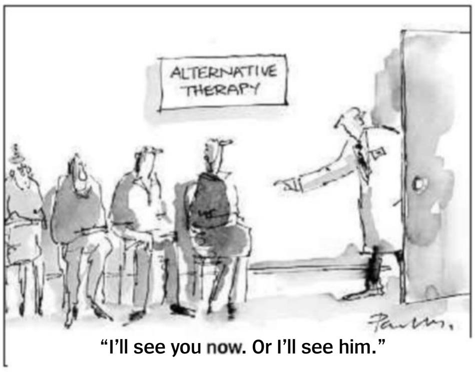
Thanks to Nick Redfern and his book about the 'Man Monkey', readers were thrilled to learn of the British Bigfoot that haunts the woods and canals of central England [see also 'The Kentish Apeman' by Neil Arnold, **FT298:16**].

I recently came across an item in a publication taken from the *Illustrated London News* (13 June 1919) that claimed 'Jacko' – thought to be a juvenile Sasquatch captured by British Columbia railway workers in December 1912 – was sold to London's Olympia Circus and exhibited as 'Jacko the Gorilla Boy' until he escaped into the streets of London. According to the article, 'Jacko' eluded capture and made his way into the countryside, "where he and his kin continue to terrorise late-night travellers on lonely roads".

Now this could have been the explanation for the existence of the UK 'Man Monkey', but according to Charlotte S Burne's *Shropshire Folklore*, a "glowing-eyed, hairy man-beast" was first seen in 1879 by a man near the Staffordshire town of Ranton.

Jerome Clark devoted an article to 'Jacko' in the *Unexplained* partwork and claimed that the story of 'Jacko' and his capture was one of those "fantastic reports of questionable authenticity" often reported in Western frontier newspapers such as the "snake stories". Therefore the story of 'Jacko' is just as enigmatic as the Bigfoot legend itself.

Greg May
Orlando, Florida



"I'll see you now. Or I'll see him."

PAULUS

The paranoid style

I was happy to see Frank Zappa's freaky face on the cover of **FT317**, and equally happy to read Robin Ramsay's restrained takedown of David McGowan's *Weird Scenes Inside the Canyon* [**FT317:19**]. From my frequent web-crawls down countercultural lane, I was familiar with McGowan's claims that LA's Laurel Canyon rock scene in the Sixties was the centre of an American military psy-ops campaign designed to drown the political radicalism of those years in a vat of LSD and irrational hedonism. I was particularly glad that Ramsay drew attention to McGowan's style. We all know the problem: a researcher piles up resonant anecdotes and enigmatic connections and suppresses or ignores countervailing evidence or more sensible engagements with statistics (i.e. Ramsay's point that there were lots of kids whose parents worked for the military in those days). One of the most ludicrous elements of McGowan's arguments for me is the idea that a psy-ops conspiracy could somehow manage, let alone engineer, a fiercely independent and stone-cold musical genius like Frank Zappa – even if you don't like his music, his technical sophistication, prolificacy, and control-freak audacity make him one of a kind.

I appreciate Ramsay's point that McGowan's "paranoid style" does a disservice to more sober conspiracy theory by allowing the state and media to marginalise the whole discourse by fusing and confusing carefully researched accounts of real-world conspiracies with fever dreams and even mental aberration. But the fault doesn't lie with the researchers alone – it also lies, to some degree, with the consumers of this stuff, especially those who should "know better". I myself admit to having enjoyed McGowan's material quite a lot, and even passing it on to friends, though I recognise what a bad historian he is. That "wink wink" pattern-weaving lures the reader into the cognitive thrills of unchecked confirmation bias and the thrilling sense that you are getting a peek at that ominous something that lies just over your shoulder. In the right late-night frame of mind, I might even hold that his research is a kind of allegorical dream-map of the complex landscape of social control and experimentation in those years. I suspect there are many readers who are interested in serious conspiracy theory who also have a taste for such counter-normative fever-dreams and enigmatic flickerings of the pattern-that-connects. After all, once you have seen the fnords…

Erik Davis
San Francisco, California

Slenderman

Ian Vincent's feature on the Slenderman phenomenon [**FT317:30-37**] is one of the most interesting and thought-provoking articles I've read in FT for quite a while, raising many issues and themes about the fantastic imagination and modern hi-tech communications.

If we had set out to create the perfect habitat in which supernatural entities, spiritually ambivalent beings, non-corporeal agencies, and ghost-like figures of all kinds could live and breathe and have their being, we could hardly have done a better job than the Internet, and I feel Slenderman is the (living?) proof of that theory. Millions of people and souls, all those thousands and thousands of websites to hide in, and even – if they need it – the actual electrical power of the world's computers and mobile phones to provide sustenance and energy.

The way in which Slenderman evolved is fascinating, and his development through an almost 100 per cent web-based habitat of great interest, particularly the involvement of the YouTube video clip series Marble Hornets. On reading it I was instantly reminded, as one of the participants commented, of the Japanese horror film *Ringu*, and its horrific female demon "Sadako", whose malevolent curse "breeds" through the copying of VHS tape. Horror aficionados will recognise similar themes in other films, such as *One Missed Call* – also Japanese – where a vengeful spirit inhabits mobile phone networks, and John Carpenter's (regretfully little known) *In The Mouth of Madness*, in which to watch the film is to become possessed by the very evil force it describes. While one of the best-known movie boogeymen of all, Freddy Krueger, is a textbook *tulpa* or thought-form, in that he achieves his hold on reality through the dreams of teenagers. (Wes Craven always claimed that *A Nightmare on Elm Street* was based on actual cases he had read about, in Indonesia, as I recall).

And yet, despite such contemporary echoes, Jenny Coleman is correct in pointing out that Slenderman is not a new phenomenon. In fact, he is little different from aspects of mediæval superstitious belief, and his like can often be recognised in the iconography of demons and evil entities in countless gargoyles, paintings, frescoes, and illustrated religious panels throughout Western Europe. It is all too apparent that we carry our collective nightmares and devils through the ages with us.

But to answer some of the questions implied by both authors, I think it possible that "Slendy" may become more "real", or hyper-real, than his forbears. In an odd way the sweep of rational belief, science, and all-pervasive instant worldwide communication technology has made these entities stronger, not weaker, as sceptics and debunkers might imagine. Just as *Phantasm*'s "Tall Man" and his dwarf-like creatures can slip between dimensions, so Slenderman can cheat disbelief by using the reality of the Internet against us. One minute he is an obvious Photoshop creation, the next he unexpectedly turns up on a website, then finally takes on a seeming actual presence that must be obeyed and, perhaps, worshipped – and sacrificed to. Furthermore, it's often said that once created, a god cannot be killed or destroyed, hence the impossibility of harming or defeating Slenderman.

There is another saying: "Be careful what you wish for". Perhaps we should be even more careful what we imagine – and create.

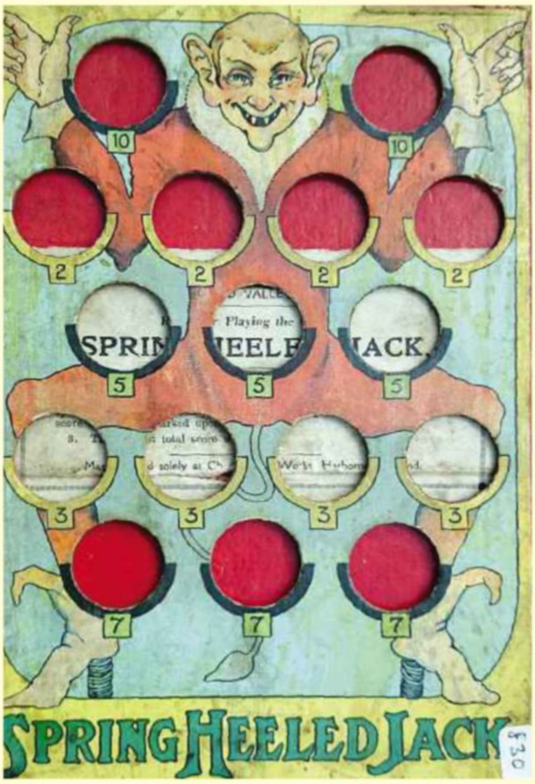
Paul Pearson
Worksop, Nottinghamshire

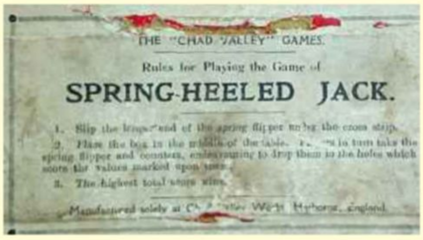
Morphing muse

Nil Erik Grande's letter "Making memories" [**FT318:74**] was an interesting examination of the patterned-whole approach of the 'narrative self', with memory playing tricks by filling in any gaps with leapfrog fabrications. Life's a stitch-up, Govnor! We're all guilty. This metamorphing leap into the unknown through imagination conveniently fashions a plausible, meaningful, makeshift reality for us. We all have liminal tunnel visions worm-holing into novel speculations. The very riddle that sifts and filters to form an acceptable gestalt is in consciousness itself. Those blind, bound dancing partners of dyadic identity –'Nothing and Being' – lead us a merry dance indeed.

Regarding hypnagogic voices, which I myself have experienced nightly for over 25 years (I'm 77 years old), one can validly ask: "Who goes there?" Like the dreamtime, sentinel-mind straddling self and other, we can ask who speaks? – and who listens? Is it a spirit-posing, so-called psychic contact? Am I then a silent witness whose alibi is doubled consciously in another dimension? Or perhaps it's the brain's left and right hemispheres communicating? Who knows? I'm still a 'survivor' asking the question.

Terry Little
Sherbourne, Dorset

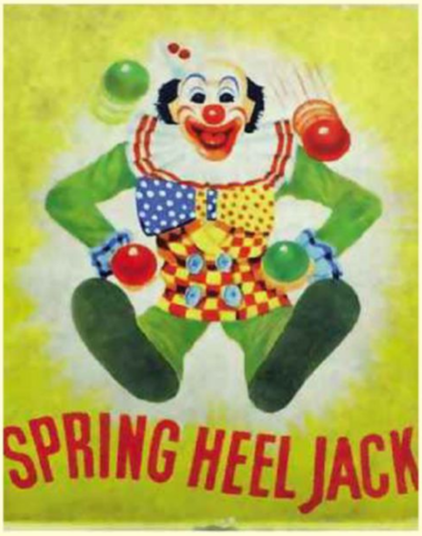




THE "CHAD VALLEY" GAMES.

Rules for Playing the Game of

SPRING-HEELED JACK.



Spring-heeled game

Rummaging through the stalls of second-had goodies at Tynemouth Market, Tyne and Wear, I came upon a vintage tabletop game with the ominous name of "Spring-heeled Jack." Perhaps understandably, the rules of the (disappointingly simple) game made no reference to the depredations and panic caused by the semi-mythical assailant who began terrorising the young women of London around 1837. The box contains counters and little spring-operated metal flippers. Its lid is perforated by 16 round holes and players take turns and win points by flipping their counters into these holes. The main interest lies in the design on the lid, where a splendidly devilish Jack grins to show his pointed teeth. He wears a red garment, sports a tail and has mediæval-style floppy ankle-boots set up on heels that are really coiled springs. The general effect here is of a Victorian pantomime devil, menacing but funny and stagey, a transformation that is the fate of so many once-potent bogeymen.

An Internet search has turned up two other versions of the same basic game – from the 1880s (left) and from 1930 (above). The latter has a far less threatening personification and doesn't actually use the lid of the box as the playing board, which appears unperforated.

Gail-Nina Anderson
Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

letters

THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS STORIES
ForteanTimes
WOODWOSE!
IN SEARCH OF ENGLAND'S LEGENDARY WILDMAN
CAPTAIN KAYE GOES TO MARS
DEAD MEN STANDING

Green Men

Matt Salusbury's excellent article on the woodwose [**FT318:28-33**] brought to mind a book I read some years ago that offers a less supernatural but equally fascinating explanation for the strange figures that appear in mediæval church architecture, mainly in eastern England.

In *The English Resistance*, Peter Rex describes the aftermath of the Battle of Hastings. Some Anglo-Saxons refused to accept the inevitable and vowed to fight on. Taking to the woods and other lonely places, they became experts in subterfuge and camouflage (possibly giving rise to the belief that Robin Hood and his Merry Men wore Lincoln Green?) whilst waging guerrilla war against the Normans. Contemporary accounts describe these freedom fighters (or terrorists – take your pick) as Silvatici. One interpretation of this word is, perhaps tellingly, 'wildmen'.

The best-known example of these men is probably Hereward the Wake of the East Anglian Fens. Another of the Silvatici, Eadric Wild, is largely forgotten nowadays. Despite this, he is an even more fascinating character due to the later accretion of legends to his historically attested life. Said to dwell in caves and abandoned mines below the Shropshire hills, he and his retinue would occasionally emerge to terrify the region in the form of the Wild Hunt. They were also considered to be harbingers of battle and slaughter. On the eve of the outbreak of war, they were said to ride in the direction of the enemy's country making much clamour, blowing horns and emitting blood-curdling war cries. Nineteenth century inhabitants of Shropshire were advised to avert their eyes should Eadric pass. To look on him was to risk bad luck or even death. Nevertheless, those that could were expected to heed his call and take up arms to defend their country. Those who failed in this were also likely to come to a sticky end (talk about a rock and a hard place!).

Rex argues in his book that the Green Man/Wildman motif in church architecture is a tribute to the Silvatici, who kept the flame of English liberty alive in its darkest hour. A group of masons in the East of England (and occasionally elsewhere) incorporated these figures into their work as an in-joke and their own little act of defiance. In this way, the Silvatici could gaze down with a mixture of contempt and amusement on the oblivious Norman churchgoers. Over time, the motif became a common part of church decoration even as its true meaning was forgotten. Like nature, culture abhors a vacuum, and new stories were woven around these strange figures.

Of course, there's no actual proof that this is how it happened. But then, when isn't that the case?

Stephen Micklewright
Hampshire

I was very interested to read Matt Salusbury's article, but must just correct him on a few small errors. The satanic looking bull on the font in St Mary's church, Halesworth, is a representation of St Luke rather than St John who is represented by an eagle. The other two evangelists Mark and Matthew are represented by a winged lion and an angel respectively. St Peter's church, Sibton, was never an abbey church. The remains of the church and claustural buildings of the Cistercian abbey, the only one of this order in Suffolk, lay across the fields to the north of the church, which has always been parochial.

The reason for the survival of the carvings of woodwoses and lions on fonts is because they were possibly not seen as being 'idolatrous images' as they were not 'images of veneration' unlike the images of saints whose aid could be invoked by prayers and offerings. The woodwoses on the font shaft at St Andrew's, Wickham Skeith, have been smashed almost beyond recognition, but they alternate with the symbols of the evangelists; whereas those woodwoses which alternate with lions seem to have escaped mutilation somewhat better.

The 'boring old font' at St Mary's, Cratfield is in fact one of a series of fonts referred to as 'a seven sacraments font'. There are only 38 of these fonts in the country and are concentrated in south Suffolk and Norfolk. The panels on the bowl show images of the seven sacraments being carried out. There is of course one extra panel on these octagonal fonts, usually depicting the crucifixion – although other images are sometimes depicted. Many of the panels on these fonts were mutilated like those at Holy Trinity, Blythburgh, which have been scraped leaving a smooth plain surface. Others however, like Cratfield, were plastered over, the plaster being removed only during the Victorian period revealing the images beneath. The font at Cratfield is actually considered to be the finest seven sacraments font in existence.

The siting of the figures of woodwoses within or without the church building is the key to understanding why such apparently incongruous and baffling images are found in a Christian place of worship. The fonts are of a style that can be described as uniquely East Anglian. Although there are some variations in the images depicted on them, all are octagonal and the woodwoses always appear on the shaft of the font below the bowl, which in the mediæval period would always have contained blessed water used for baptism. Baptism in the mediæval church was considered to be the admission of a person into society as a Christian soul. No one was to be left outside of society and the consolation and redemption offered by the sacraments of the Church.

In the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar is humbled by God and ejected from society and he becomes hairy and lives like a beast. The woodwoses are such beasts living in the liminal space outside of society and the church. They inhabit doorways on the threshold of the help offered by the church or are held down by the weight of the truth of the Gospels and water of baptism below the wings of angels. They are, as was so much in mediæval religion, an apocryphal symbol of the purpose of the sacrament of baptism: the acceptance of each new soul into the Church militant. It is also worth mentioning that there was a curious belief in the mediæval period that lion cubs were stillborn and brought to life three days after birth by the roaring of their parents! This seems to go a long way to explaining the existence of these images on fonts.

Mr Salusbury should also be aware that when drinking in the Low House at Laxfield one sits, not on 'high backed pews', but a particular communal chair designed to reduce draughts and referred to as a settle.

Mark Utting
Thornham Magna, Suffolk

As well as the examples cited by Matt Salusbury, woodwoses turn up as supporters in the heraldry of a number of north German states, including Prussia. This is understandable: throughout the Middle Ages, Germans were pushing forward from their eastern borders into the forests and marshes where pagan Prussians still lived. No region of Europe was more likely to host wild men. Is there some connection between Suffolk and north Germany in the late Middle Ages? I have not been able to find one.

Martin Jenkins

it happened to me...

Have you had strange experiences that you cannot explain?
We are always interested in reading of odd events and occurrences.
CONTACT US BY POST: **FORTEAN TIMES, BOX 2409, LONDON, NW5 4NP**
OR E-MAIL TO **sieveking@forteantimes.com**
Or post your message on the **www.forteantimes.com** message board.

First-hand accounts of goings-on from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

Black-Eyed Children

I would like to relay an experience that happened to me about 15 years ago. The reason I bring it up now is because I just became aware of a phenomenon to which it may be linked. I had never heard of the black-eyed children until I was googling something else about a month back and they came up on a list relating to unexplained phenomena. My experience was not really similar to the traditional one, but it has kept me puzzled for a decade and a half.

In the fall of 1999 I began my freshman year at a small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania. I was studying in the library one night around 8-9pm. I got up from my cubicle and walked to the front of the floor towards the staircase leading to the ground floor. As I emerged from the stacks, two girls, aged about 18 or 19, were sitting at a table. The one on my left looked at me and a feeling of fear and dread came over that I can't explain to this day. Her eyes were solid black, no pupils, just solid black, like two balls of black ink or liquid tar. I froze, horrified for about three seconds, then fled the library. I went directly to the room of a friend of mine where a group of my friends was hanging out. I told my tale and was met with general ridicule, the brunt of which was towards my horrified reaction. I have to admit I agree with them; I have no idea why that feeling of absolute fear came over me inside a well-lit public building, but it did. I asked many people about that girl, and nobody had ever seen her. I finished all four years there and never heard or saw anything related to a black-eyed individual. Has any reader had an experience along similar lines?

Mathew Perrone
Scarsdale, New York

ETIENNE GILFILLAN

> "Her eyes were solid black, no pupils, just solid black, like two balls of black ink or liquid tar"

Phantom miaows

Do you, or did you when you first got a cat, ever believe 100 per cent that you could hear them miaowing frantically somewhere, and investigate anxiously only to find them perfectly peaceful or even asleep? The reason I ask is because I have very recently become the unexpected and inexperienced adoptive parent of an 'adolescent' cat (who has a potentially life-shortening health condition: this may or may not be relevant, as discussed below).

On around 70 per cent of the occasions when he goes out of my sight, I am suddenly convinced I can hear him crying somewhere in the middle distance. And it has happened with near 100 per cent frequency every time he ventures outside on his own, and repeatedly so during each absence. I've sometimes been so convinced that it's him that I've stood outside in the garden at gone midnight, making cat-summoning noises to a dark and deserted street like a damn fool. It is such a realistic and clear miaowing sound that it really surprises me and makes me automatically concerned, but after many repeat 'false alarm' incidents such as the scenario described above, I have started to 'focus my ears' (if that makes sense) whenever I think it is happening again. And when I do that, I find that the phantom miaow usually resolves into high-pitched noises (more often, the high-pitched frequencies in broad-frequency sounds such as dialogue) emanating from television programmes being watched in another room by my (slightly deaf) co-tenant, or is being falsely 'perceived' amid the white noise and continuous background sound of living in south-west London.

After much head-scratching, I have come to a theory that I would like to share. I suspect that domestic cats – which are essentially, let's be honest, parasites on humans when all's said and done – have been naturally selected (and to a degree, deliberately or even unconsciously bred by humans) for characteristics that exploit human parental instincts.

Over the years, I have heard it said several times (in real life and in dramas) that new parents, especially mothers, will vividly hear the immediately unmistakeable sound of their temporarily-unattended new arrival crying alarmingly and will drop everything and dash to the rescue... only to find the baby fast asleep or gurgling peacefully. I don't believe any formal study has ever been conducted concerning this memorable phenomenon, so it is almost part of parenting folklore.

I hypothesise that we humans have a hitherto unrecognised and unclassified hardwired instinct to be over-vigilant for sounds indicating infant distress and that new parents consequently 'over-perceive' such alarms among other stimuli – it's easy to see how such a neurological quirk would be strongly naturally selected-for and propagated widely once it had arisen. It would therefore make a degree of sense that cats – with their warm and wriggly little bodies, large eyes and high-pitched voices – can perhaps 'activate' those protective and nurturing drives to a degree, producing such 'false alarms' without any human baby being involved.

As I have considered this beguiling idea, I've found it easy to accept that this 'alarm system' would be even more strongly activated by sharing a living space with a cat whose health was a known cause for concern, as is my cat's case.

I am writing this letter at just gone midnight on the fifth day of my cat's residence with me, and he's currently out for the night – and I swear by Almighty God that it's just happened again between typing that last paragraph and starting this new one! If it is an 'over-reacting' protective and nurturing instinct, I would expect that it would weaken over time and eventually fade away as it becomes needed less often and I therefore anticipate this happening as I get used to having my own little toerag around the place, until I almost take him for granted sometimes. This is another reason why I felt I had to share this weird experience, in case it slipped from my mind without me ever mentioning it.

I mentioned the Phantom Miaow in an email to my sister, to which she replied: "Don't you remember me sitting in the kitchen and saying I was sure I could hear a cat crying only for you to say it was the fridge or something? I was constantly checking the front door or the back because I thought I could hear them crying. It doesn't settle down completely but one does become inured to it somewhat." Now she mentions it, I do dimly remember her mentioning such a thing, because she was quite upset by it sometimes. Thank God it's not just me!

Does the above-described phenomenon ring a bell with any cat owners or parents? Since I don't think I'm going doolally, the only alternative I can think of to my little theory is that this house has an incredibly annoying ghost cat that arrived at the same time as the real one.

Garrick Alder
Kingston Upon Thames

reader info

how to subscribe

ANNUAL SUB of 12 issues (inc p&p) UK £39.98; EC £47.50; USA $89.99 ($161.98 for 24 issues); Rest of World £55.
Please see house ads in the latest issue for details of special offers.

North America (US & Canada)

Subscribers should contact: IMS. 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA 23454, USA. Tel: 888-428 6676. or 800-428 3003; Fax: 757 428 6253; Or order online at www.imsnews.com.

UK, Europe & rest of world

Major credit cards accepted. Cheques or money orders should be in sterling, preferably drawn on a London bank and made payable to Dennis Publishing. Mail to: **Fortean Times** Dovetail Services, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, ME9 8GU, UK. NB: This address should be used for orders and subscriptions only.
Telephone payments and queries: 0844 844 0049.
Fax payments and queries: 0844 815 0866.
E-mail payments and queries: ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

how to submit

Dennis Publishing reserves all rights to reuse material submitted by *FT* readers and contributors in any medium or format.

Illustrations

Contact the art director by email (etienne@forteantimes.com) before sending samples of work. We cannot guarantee to respond to unsolicited work, though every effort will be made to do so.

Article submissions

Please send all submissions to David Sutton, Editor, Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD, UK or email drsuttton@forteantimes.com. As we receive a large volume of submissions, a decision may not be immediate. A contributors' guide is available at www.forteantimes.com.

Letters

Letters of comment or about experiences are welcome. Send to PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK or email sieveking@forteantimes.com. We reserve the right to edit submissions.

Books, periodicals, DVDs and other material for review

Send to: Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD, UK.

Caveat

FT aims to present the widest range of interpretations to stimulate discussion and welcomes helpful criticism. The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the editors. *FT* can take no responsibility for submissions, but will take all reasonable care of material in its possession. Requests for return of material should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or an International Reply Coupon.

We occasionally use material that has been placed in the public domain. It is not always possible to identify the copyright holder. If you claim credit for something we've published, we'll be pleased to make acknowledgement.

Clippers wanted!

Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: 1 NOV 2014. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

Mail to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK
E-mail: sieveking@forteantimes.com
or post on the FT website at www.forteantimes.co.uk, where there is a contributor's guide.

Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox. **FT** toes no party line.

Special Correspondents

AUSTRALIA Graham Cordon (SA), Tony Healy (ACT), John Palazzi (NSW), Len Watson (Qld). **CANADA** Brian Chapman (BC), Graham Conway (BC), **CYBERSPACE** Richard Alexander, John F Callahan, Hugh Henry, Steve Scanlon. **ENGLAND** Gail-Nina Anderson, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Claire Blamey, Peter Christie, Mat Coward, Kate Eccles, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Paul Gallagher, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Anne Hardwick, Richard Lowke, Alexis Lykiard, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Nick Warren, Owen Whiteoak, Bobby Zodiac. **FRANCE** Michel Meurger. **GERMANY** Ulrich Magin. **HOLLAND** Robin Pascoe. **IRELAND** Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Andrew Munro. **ISRAEL** Zvi Ron. **NEW ZEALAND** Peter Hassall. **ROMANIA** Iosif Boczor. **SCOTLAND** Roger Musson. **SWEDEN** Sven Rosén. **THAILAND** Chris Williams. **USA** Loren Coleman (ME), Jim Conlan (CT), Myron Hoyt (ME), Greg May (FL), Dolores Phelps (TX), Jim Riecken (NY), Joseph Trainor (MA), Jeffrey Vallance (CA), Gary Yates (UT). **WALES** Janet & Colin Bord.

Fort Sorters (who classify clippings placed in the Archives for Fortean Research)

Phil Baker, Rachel Carthy, Mark Pilkington, Bob Rickard, Paul Sieveking, Ian Simmons.

Clipping Credits for FT320

Michael Ahmed, Richard Alexander, Gail-Nina Anderson, Gerard Apps, David V Barrett, Louise Bath, James Beckett, John F Callahan, Peter Christie, Andy Cobley, Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Graham Cordon, Charlotte Davies, Emily Davies, John H Evans, Paul Farthing, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Benjamin Gleisser, Hugh Henry, Nigel Herwin, Kevin Hubbard, Colin Ings, Paul Jackson, Rosalind Johnson, Bill & Louise Kelly, Andy Lapham, Richard Lowke, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Bert & Betty Gray-Malkin, Nick Maloret, Tom Mason, Greg May, Paul Music, John Palazzi, Jim Price, Keith Ruffles, Tom Ruffles, Paul Screeton, Patrick Sheehy, Gary Stocker, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Joe Trainor, Rob Turville, Carole Tyrrell, Nicholas Warren, Len Watson, Owen Whiteoak, Paul Whyte, Janet Wilson, Bobby Zodiac, Zebbie Zubbeh.

For car buying advice, would you go to neighbour Petulia?

No, for real-life, no-nonsense, buying advice go to Carbuyer

We won't just tell you what it is like to drive a car, we'll tell you what it is like to own. We'll reveal the running costs, explain what might go wrong and you can find out what existing owners think. So for information that'll help you buy your perfect new car, there's only one place to go.

carbuyer.co.uk

☑ Trusted reviews ☑ Owner opinion ☑ Expert advice

POLICE
THE ILLUS
DIEU ET
HONI
LAW COURTS AND WEE

JAN BONDESON presents more sensational stories and startling Victorian images from the "worst newspaper in England" – the *Illustrated Police News*.

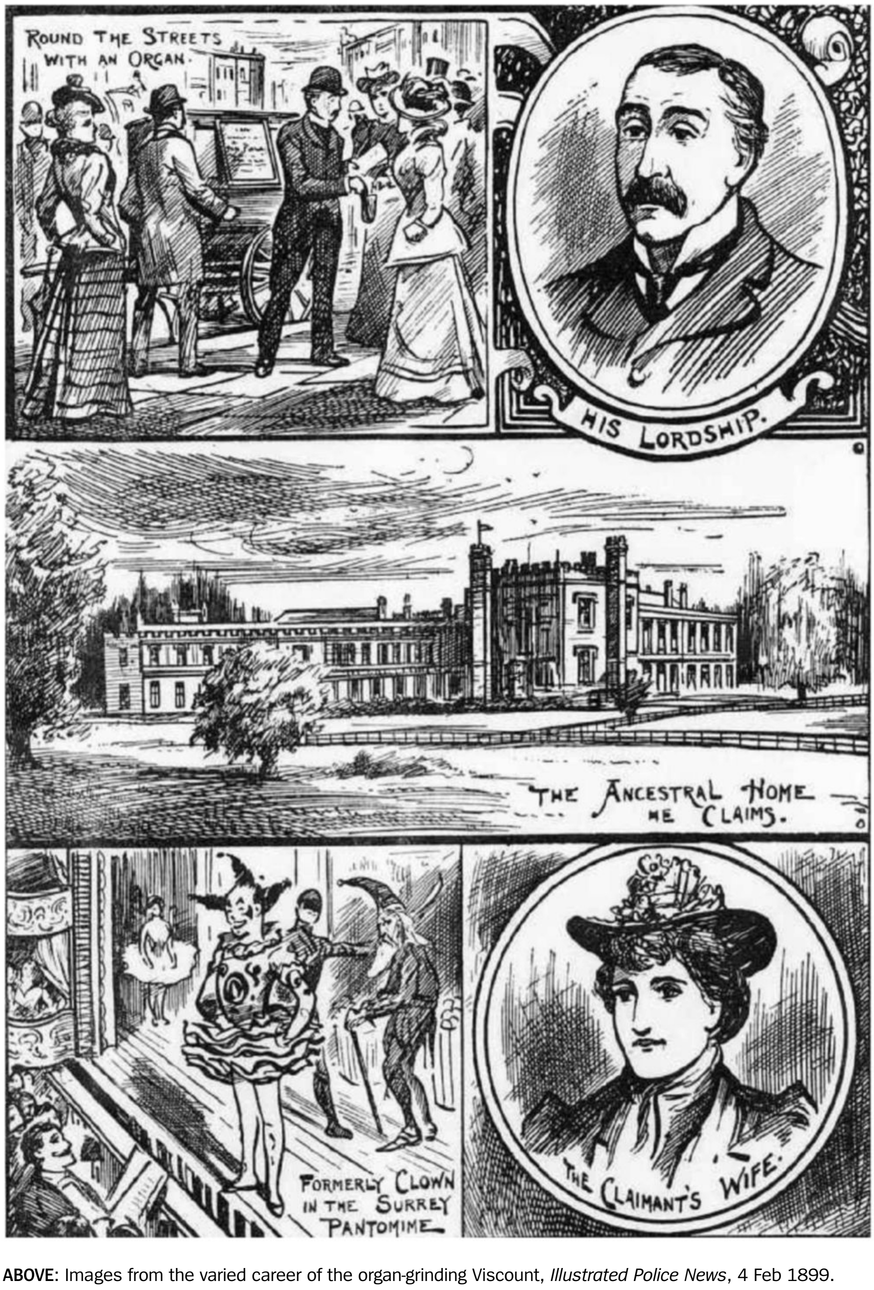
33. THE POULETT CLAIMANT

In the summer of 1849, when some jolly young English officers in Dublin sat drinking and gambling in their mess room, one of them thought of an amusing bet. If another of their number, Lieutenant William Poulett, agreed to marry the first woman he saw after walking out of the barracks, he would win £500; otherwise he would forfeit the same amount of money. Drunken young William Poulett, the nephew of the Earl of the same name, thought this a capital idea. And he did not 'chicken out' of his bet: when he met Miss Eliza Newman, the daughter of a humble Dublin pilot, he politely asked her hand in marriage. After they had wed a week later, Poulett cashed in £500 from his friends.

The caddish young Poulett installed Eliza in his quarters, without telling anybody that she was actually his wife. When the Colonel came to call on her, in the belief that Poulett was illicitly keeping a mistress in his quarters, she indignantly showed him the marriage certificate. Lieutenant Poulett received a severe reprimand for his foolish conduct, and became the laughing stock of the regiment. In a furious temper, he returned to his quarters, beat his wife mercilessly, and kicked her out of the barracks promising more ill-usage should she ever return. Poor Mrs Poulett went to join her mother in Portsmouth, where six months later she gave birth to her infant son William. With the help of a small allowance from her cad of a husband, she was able to send her son to the French and English College at Merton, but there was no money for him to receive any higher education. Instead, young William wanted to become an actor. He played the leading role in 'Sweeney Todd' at the Garrick for a salary of 25 shillings per week. This enabled him to marry the young ballet dancer Lydia Shippey, and set up a humble family home in London. But not long after, disaster struck: William accidentally stumbled down an open trapdoor, breaking the fall with his jaw. He became disfigured for life, and had to play comic parts, where his chinless appearance would actually be an advantage. In the end, he became a circus clown.

In the meantime, Lieutenant William Poulett had been hounded out of his regiment as a result of his scandalous marriage. He joined the 22nd Foot instead and went to India, serving during the Mutiny. His relatives back in England started dying off at an alarming rate, however, and after old Earl Poulett had expired in 1861, Captain William Poulett inherited the title. Overjoyed, he retired from the military, settled down at stately Hinton House near Crewkerne, and built up a stable of expensive racehorses.

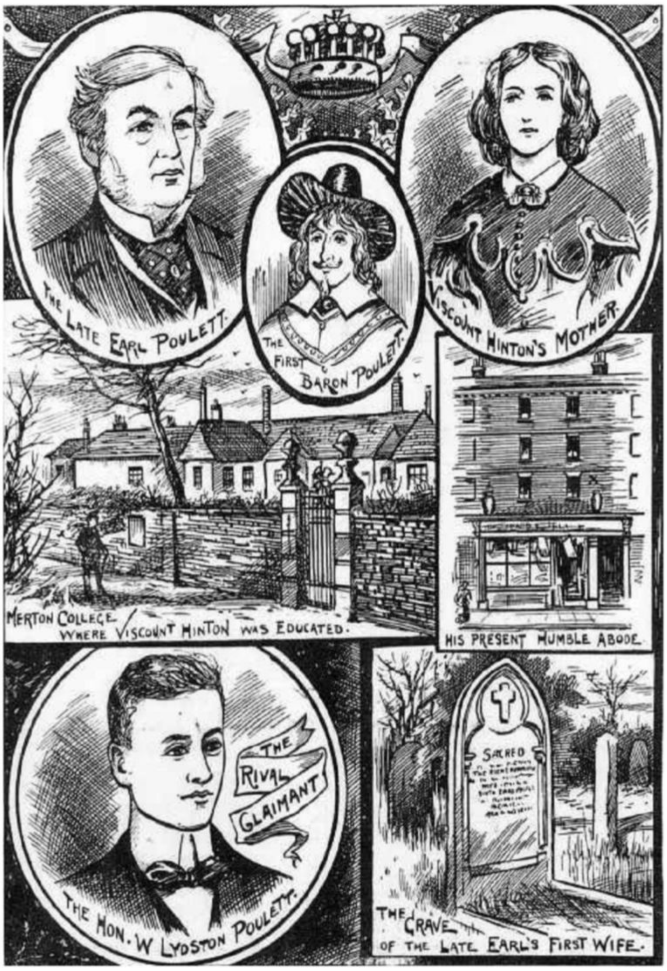
The year 1871 was a good one for Earl Poulett: firstly, his horse 'The Lamb' won the Grand National, and secondly, his estranged


ROUND THE STREETS WITH AN ORGAN.
HIS LORDSHIP.
THE ANCESTRAL HOME HE CLAIMS.
FORMERLY CLOWN IN THE SURREY PANTOMIME
THE CLAIMANT'S WIFE.

ABOVE: Images from the varied career of the organ-grinding Viscount, *Illustrated Police News*, 4 Feb 1899.

wife died, allowing him to marry again. The caddish nobleman wanted to make this a hat-trick of breakthroughs in his career. He invited his 'son' the circus clown to his club, and offered him a handsome yearly allowance if he went to India or some equally far-away place. If the Earl had used some degree of tact or astuteness, he might well have been able to 'export' poor William abroad, but instead he acted in his usual snobbish manner, declaring that William was a bastard in more ways than one: he was definitely the son of the man who had 'kept' his mother prior to her marriage. After William refused to go abroad, the Earl cut him off without a penny.

Fortunately for William, he received financial help from the dowager Duchess of Cleveland, who was on bad terms with Earl Poulett. She provided William with some money, and he assumed the family's courtesy title of Viscount Hinton. The Duchess also helped him to set up 'Lord Hinton's Burlesque and Comedy Company', a travelling circus. They toured for a few months, visiting Crewkerne to annoy the Earl, before the money ran out.


The Late Earl Poulett.
The First Baron Poulett.
Viscount Hinton's Mother.
Merton College where Viscount Hinton was educated.
His present humble abode.
The Rival Claimant
The Hon. W Lydston Poulett.
Sacred
The Grave of the late Earl's first wife.

LEFT: The old Earl, the junior claimant, and some other images from the Poulett family, from *Illustrated Police News*, 18 Feb 1899.

The kind Duchess again helped William to get on his feet, setting him up as a clown and female impersonator at St James's Theatre. In the early 1880s, after developing some kind of speech impediment, William had to retire from the theatre. Instead, he fell in with a gang of criminals, who wanted to use the weak and foolish Viscount as a front for their fraudulent company. In 1886, they were all arrested, and William was sentenced to 12 months in prison, with hard labour. His poor wife screamed and fainted in court, since she was fearful her ailing husband would die in prison. After his release in 1887, the Viscount was in desperate straits. He took to tramping London with a street organ, with a placard saying: "I am Viscount Hinton, eldest son of Earl Poulett. I have adopted this as a means of earning a living, my father having refused to assist me through no fault of my own."

The Viscount turned organ-grinder became one of the curiosities of London: people of all classes came to see him, and to put a penny into the collecting-box of the thin, careworn-looking man grinding away at his instrument.

In January 1899, Earl Poulett expired at the age of 72. Although his habit of purchasing expensive but slow racehorses, and betting large sums of money on these animals, had seriously depleted the family coffers, there was still stately Hinton House and a wealth of other real estate that the Earl had not had the time to squander. The organ-grinding Viscount lost no time in consulting a solicitor and claiming the Earldom; his rival was the old Earl's son by his third marriage.

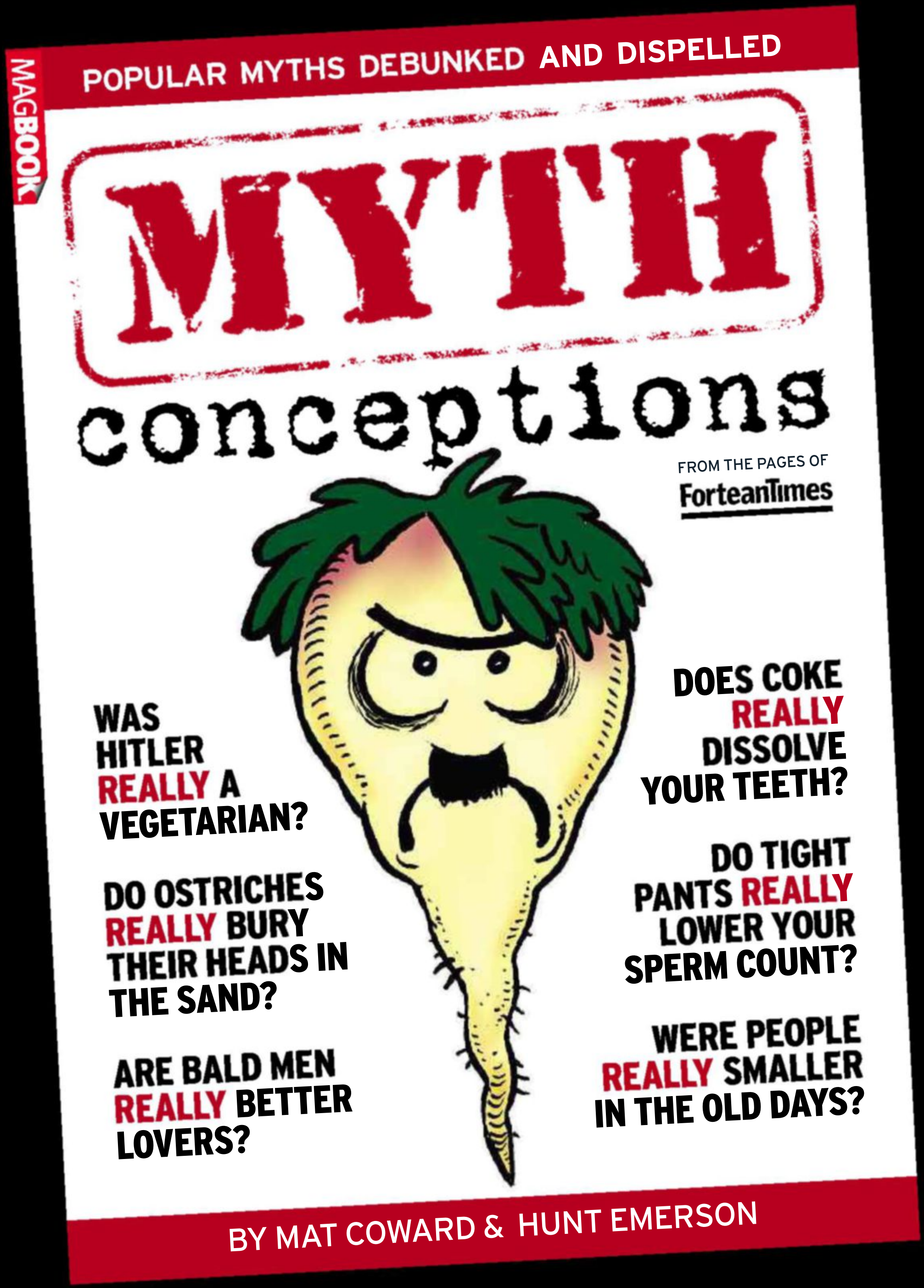
For a few heady months, the Viscount was a major newspaper celebrity. Since an organ-grinder aspiring to become an Earl was certainly *Illustrated Police News* material, there were some lengthy features about him in this newspaper, illustrated with ribald original drawings. The Viscount seemed quite optimistic now he could finally cast off the yoke of poverty and claim the title and family estates. He sold his street organ to Madame Tussaud's for £60, before sitting for his likeness, modelled by Mr John Tussaud and dressed in a suit of his own shabby clothes.

But the organ-grinding Viscount was up against wealthy and powerful enemies. The old Earl had never made it a secret that he preferred the son from his third marriage and detested the organ-grinding clown his first wife had tried to foist upon him. Since the Committee of Privileges of the House of Lords was not a body that believed in hasty action, the Poulett peerage hearing did not begin until July 1903. The Viscount could present his mother's marriage certificate and his own birth certificate, proving that she had been married to Lieutenant Poulett at the time he himself had been born. At this time, it was standard to presume that a child born in wedlock was not illegitimate. But after due deliberation, the Committee rejected the Viscount's claim, since he had been born just six months after the marriage. The real reason was probably that the organ-grinding Viscount was such a very unattractive specimen of humanity, whereas the younger claimant was a handsome young gentleman.

The heartbroken 'Viscount', who was now just Mr William Turnour, went back to Madame Tussaud's to reclaim his organ, before setting out to tramp the endless streets of London once again. He died at the infirmary of Holborn Union Workhouse in 1909.

Young Earl Poulett married an actress and became a popular society figure. He died of influenza while serving as an army captain in the Great War. He was succeeded by his young son, who also married an actress, although she later deserted him. When the last Earl Poulett died childless in 1973, all his titles became extinct. Hinton House has been sold and is today subdivided into flats. Are they perhaps haunted by a slow, shuffling gait of a broken old man, and the ghostly sound of an old-fashioned street organ?

THE TRUTH ISN'T OUT THERE...

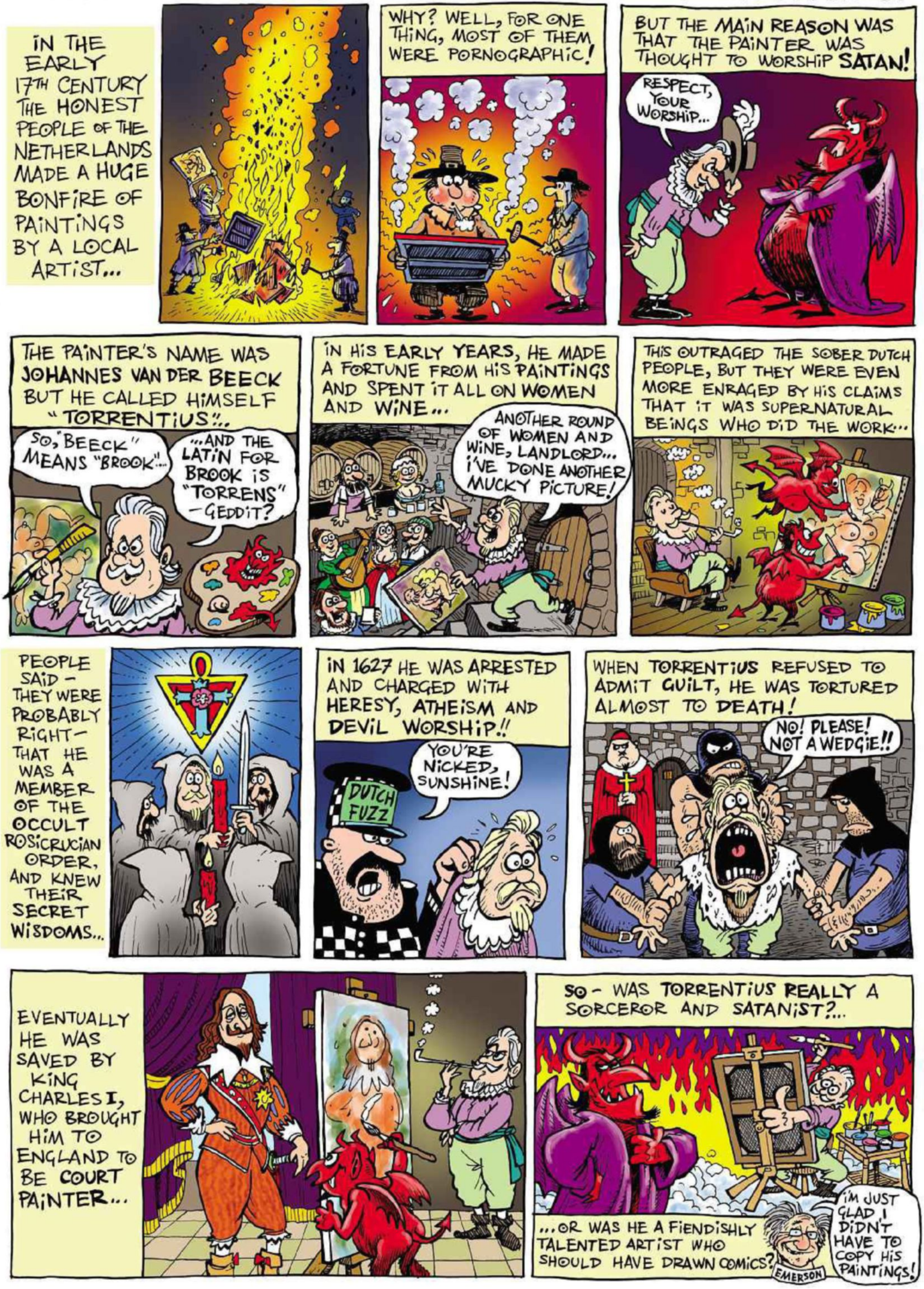


MAGBOOK
POPULAR MYTHS DEBUNKED AND DISPELLED
MYTH
conceptions
FROM THE PAGES OF
ForteanTimes
WAS HITLER REALLY A VEGETARIAN?
DO OSTRICHES REALLY BURY THEIR HEADS IN THE SAND?
ARE BALD MEN REALLY BETTER LOVERS?
DOES COKE REALLY DISSOLVE YOUR TEETH?
DO TIGHT PANTS REALLY LOWER YOUR SPERM COUNT?
WERE PEOPLE REALLY SMALLER IN THE OLD DAYS?
BY MAT COWARD & HUNT EMERSON

AVAILABLE FROM AMAZON.CO.UK
OR VISIT MAGBOOKS.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION

amazon.co.uk

PHENOMENOMIX "TORRENTIUS" HUNT EMERSON & KEVIN JACKSON


IN THE EARLY 17TH CENTURY THE HONEST PEOPLE OF THE NETHERLANDS MADE A HUGE BONFIRE OF PAINTINGS BY A LOCAL ARTIST...
WHY? WELL, FOR ONE THING, MOST OF THEM WERE PORNOGRAPHIC!
BUT THE MAIN REASON WAS THAT THE PAINTER WAS THOUGHT TO WORSHIP SATAN!
RESPECT, YOUR WORSHIP...
THE PAINTER'S NAME WAS JOHANNES VAN DER BEECK BUT HE CALLED HIMSELF "TORRENTIUS"...
SO, "BEECK" MEANS "BROOK"...
...AND THE LATIN FOR BROOK IS "TORRENS" – GEDDIT?
IN HIS EARLY YEARS, HE MADE A FORTUNE FROM HIS PAINTINGS AND SPENT IT ALL ON WOMEN AND WINE...
ANOTHER ROUND OF WOMEN AND WINE, LANDLORD... I'VE DONE ANOTHER MUCKY PICTURE!
THIS OUTRAGED THE SOBER DUTCH PEOPLE, BUT THEY WERE EVEN MORE ENRAGED BY HIS CLAIMS THAT IT WAS SUPERNATURAL BEINGS WHO DID THE WORK...
PEOPLE SAID – THEY WERE PROBABLY RIGHT – THAT HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE OCCULT ROSICRUCIAN ORDER, AND KNEW THEIR SECRET WISDOMS...
IN 1627 HE WAS ARRESTED AND CHARGED WITH HERESY, ATHEISM AND DEVIL WORSHIP!!
DUTCH FUZZ
YOU'RE NICKED, SUNSHINE!
WHEN TORRENTIUS REFUSED TO ADMIT GUILT, HE WAS TORTURED ALMOST TO DEATH!
NO! PLEASE! NOT A WEDGIE!!
EVENTUALLY HE WAS SAVED BY KING CHARLES I, WHO BROUGHT HIM TO ENGLAND TO BE COURT PAINTER...
SO – WAS TORRENTIUS REALLY A SORCEROR AND SATANIST?...
...OR WAS HE A FIENDISHLY TALENTED ARTIST WHO SHOULD HAVE DRAWN COMICS?
EMERSON
I'M JUST GLAD I DIDN'T HAVE TO COPY HIS PAINTINGS!

COMING NEXT MONTH

FINDING FAIRIES

CONTEMPORARY ENCOUNTERS WITH THE LITTLE PEOPLE

THE MIND ELECTRIC

ELECTROMAGNETIC EXPLANATIONS FOR NDEs

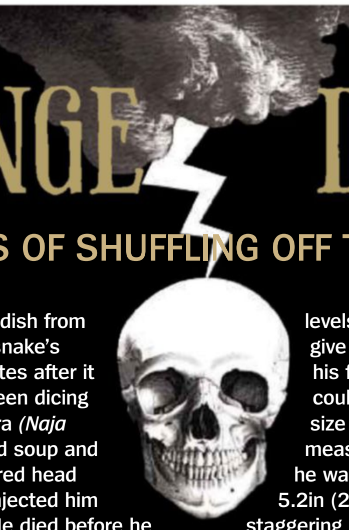
+

**HAIRLESS HYENAS,
LUCIFER IN LINCOLN,
FALSE FLAGS
AND MUCH MORE…**

FORTEAN TIMES
321
ON SALE 13 NOV 2014

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL



A Chinese chef, preparing a dish from cobra flesh, died when the snake's head bit his hand – 20 minutes after it was cut off. Peng Fan had been dicing an Indochinese spitting cobra *(Naja siamensis)* for a highly prized soup and was about to throw its severed head into the waste bin when it injected him with its fast-acting venom. He died before he could be given an anti-venom injection. Diners who were eating in the restaurant at the time described screams coming from the kitchen as the tragedy unfolded.

Peng was from Shunde, a district in the city of Foshan in southern China's Guangdong province. Residents of the province have a long history of enjoying snake meats of all sorts in local culinary dishes. Often served up in a soup, it is also believed that snake meat has curative properties. "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger" – the more poisonous the delicacy, the more beneficial it is considered. Snake soup, popular for more than 2,000 years, tastes slightly sweet because of the addition of chrysanthemum leaves and spices. The meat is said to resemble the texture and taste of chicken.

The Indochinese spitting cobra can grow to 5ft (1.5m) in length. Primarily nocturnal, it mainly feeds on rodents, toads, and other snakes. Its venom causes paralysis and consequent asphyxiation, but even if it only spits venom in a victim's eyes it can cause permanent blindness. Snake expert Yang Hong-Chang – who has spent 40 years studying cobras – said all reptiles can function for up to an hour after losing body parts, or even their entire body. "By the time a snake has lost its head, it's effectively dead as basic body functions have ceased, but there is still some reflexive action," he said. *D.Mirror, 22 Aug 2014.*

Robert Smith, 24, at 8ft 5in (2.57m) considered to be Britain's tallest man, died from a heart attack on 15 July, after contracting a superbug at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn, Norfolk, where he had been admitted for digestive problems. He had proteus syndrome – bone overgrowth and gigantism – after being born prematurely, and was unable to walk since suffering from meningitis three years ago. He had size 16 feet. "Robert was my world," said his mother Rita, 66, of Walsoken, Cambridgeshire. "He was a gentle giant." Proteus syndrome was also thought to have affected Joseph Merrick, famously known as the Elephant Man. *Metro, D.Mail, Times, D.Telegraph, 17 July 2014.*

Leonid Stadnyk **[FT187:28]**, from the Ukrainian village of Podoliantsi, who previously held the title of world's tallest man, has also died. He passed away on 24 August, aged 44, after suffering a brain hæmorrhage linked to health problems as a result of his acromegalic gigantism. His growth spurt started at the age of 14 after a botched operation to remove a benign brain tumour. The operation apparently stimulated the pituitary gland, which controls levels of growth hormones. He had to give up his job as a vet in 2002, after his feet were frostbitten because he couldn't afford proper shoes for his size 27 feet. Before his death, Stadnyk measured 8ft 4in (2.54m) – although he was once said to have been 8ft 5.2in (2.57m) tall **[FT230:26]**. Despite his staggering height, he refused to be measured for the Guinness World Records, leaving China's Bao Xishun, 7ft 8.9in (2.36m) tall, to claim the title **[FT262:18]**. The all-time record-holder, Robert Pershing Wadlow from Illinois, reached 8ft 11.1in (2.72m) shortly before his death in 1940 aged 22.

"To me, my height is a curse, a punishment from God, not something to celebrate," Stadnyk said in his last ever interview in 2007. "What sin I have committed, I do not know. All my life I have dreamed of being just like everyone else. I don't want or need the fame that this would bring so I have no desire to be in this Guinness book. I never got married because I don't want to inflict my problems on a wife. I think it would not be fair on her." *IB Times, 27 Aug 2014.*

It took Nigel Willis five days to overcome his embarrassment and get help after accidentally getting a vibrator stuck up his anus. Willis, 50, who lived in Forest Hill, south-east London, caring for his mother, was taken to Lewisham hospital in December 2013 but died after more than a month in intensive care. The dildo had pierced his bowel, which led him to suffer septic shock. "His friend called an ambulance because he complained of dizziness and was unable to move from the sofa for five days," said Dr Adebowale Adesina. *Metro, 12 Aug; Sun, 13 Aug 2014.*

A disabled man was killed by his false teeth, three years after swallowing them. Brian Holland, 44, of Stockport, Greater Manchester, who had a muscle-wasting disease, swallowed his upper dentures in May 2010. He died of internal bleeding on 9 May 2013 when the teeth wore through his oesophagus. *Sun, 21 May 2014.*

Caterina Alzetta, 20, died after her long hair became tangled in the steering wheel of her car, causing it to swerve across the road into oncoming traffic. She died in hospital from her injuries after she and her brother Pietro, 21, were cut free from the wreckage of their Ford Fiesta on the road between Montereale Valcellina and San Martino in northern Italy. Pietro, who was driving, said the accident happened after his sister wound down her window, causing her hair to fly about. *D.Mail, 30 July 2014.*

THE FORTEAN TIMES BOOK OF STRANGE DEATHS VOL 2

ON SALE NOW FROM
WH SMITH AND AMAZON.CO.UK
TO ORDER DIRECT CALL 0844 844 0053

The PRANA Talisman

ADVERTISEMENT

How does **PRANA** work? The way traditional magic has always worked!...

With very little time and effort, the Prana Talisman can provide its owner with the inner power to achieve any positive goals that they wish, however ambitious! Centuries of wisdom, knowledge and practice have percolated down from the scholars and mystics of the ancient world, and now their legacy can be revealed and offered to you, in the form of the Prana.

Here is the most important aspect; the Prana will remain nothing more than an interesting metal pendant displaying some curious and mysterious-looking symbols before it is first activated, or consecrated. However, once properly and personally consecrated, it will be transformed into a real and powerful talisman dedicated to helping you to achieve the success you desire. Just as with a brand a new car, which would first need fueling and then purposefully driving in the right direction before it could actually deliver anyone to their destination, the Prana disc will need charging with both your own positive mental energy as well as the earth's natural forces, and then focusing on your personal goals before it can succeed in achieving them. Consecrating your Prana takes only a few, but priceless minutes. Anything can be achieved with enough self belief and determination, providing it is humanly possible. Prana is the truly magic catalyst that will assist you in achieving your most ambitious goals and desires. Once your Prana has been effectively consecrated, or 'tuned', in just the way a TV antenna collects and converts invisible signals and then broadcasts them as a clear picture, it will collect and magnify all the available natural, positive forces along with your own psychic energies, and then channel them straight towards your personal goals.

The PRANA Talisman
Turn your Dreams into Reality
PRANA

. . I think that Prana talisman is working as I have been creating and drawing nonstop and with new confidence. . .
unbelievable. . .
Ms DN, London

Hey… I just wanted to let you know that the talisman is amazing! Thank you! Since I had it, work has been coming in, I feel great and everything seems to be getting better!
Ms NJ, Leicester

For further information visit-

www.PranaTalisman.com

You will feel physically and mentally stronger and energised. Confidence will brim within you and you will feel a potent force rise inside, discovering new personal powers and becoming sharp and decisive. You will intuitively recognise opportunities as they appear when previously they went-by undetected; you will feel 'lucky'!

Instead of stuff just happening around you, you will be able to make things happen!

Each PRANA talisman comes with its own 12 page booklet of easy instuctions and is supplied in a purple satin pouch.

www.PranaTalisman.com

The deluxe crystalised PRANA
The original PRANA

The PRANA Talisman

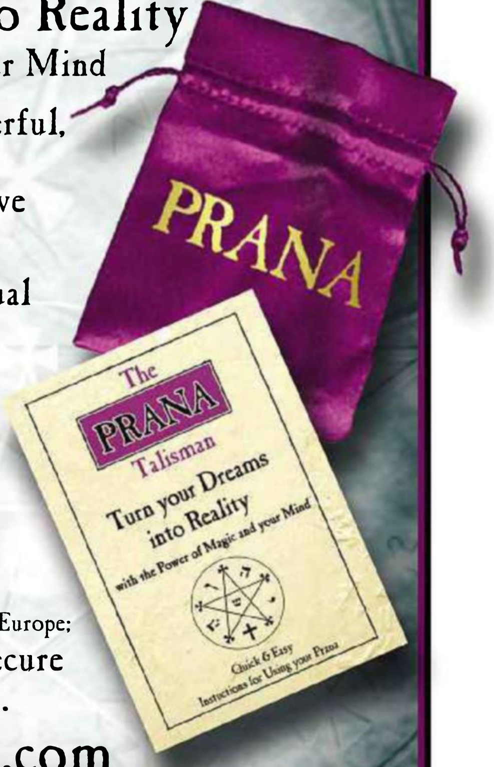
Turn your Dreams into Reality
with the Power of Magic & your Mind

PRANA is a real and very powerful, authentic magical talisman of ancient origin, to help you achieve all your goals.

Supplied in its own individual pouch & complete with a simple 12 page booklet of instructions and background information.

PRANA Original - £9.99 each
PRANA Deluxe Crystalised Edition - £14.99 each
(Shipping per order: £2.50 UK Mainland; £3.50 Europe; £5.00 R.O.W.) For full details and secure online ordering visit our website.

www.PranaTalisman.com


PRANA
The PRANA Talisman
Turn your Dreams into Reality
with the Power of Magic and your Mind
Quick & Easy Instructions for Using your Prana

PRANA - the Talisman of the Elements, the Breath of Life and the Four Archangels.

EXCEL HOME OF THE UK'S BIGGEST POP CULTURE EVENT

MCM LONDON COMIC CON

24-26 OCTOBER 2014

Comics

Manga

Cosplay

Movies

Video Games

Anime

MCM eSports POWERED BY ESL

LEAGUE of LEGENDS

QUALIFIER TOURNAMENTS

4 NATIONS TOURNAMENT

Kids Go Free*

*Kids Go Free, Children 10 and Under go free if accompanied by a paying adult. Max 2 free children per adult, applies to General Entry tickets from 11am each day.

ExCeL LONDON

Part of MCM EXPO GROUP

MCMEXPO

WWW.MCMCOMICCON.COM